The Fifth Son of the Shoemaker

DONALD CORLEY

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by

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ROBERT M McBRIDE & COMPANY

NEW YORK MCMXXX

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Published, September, 1930

THE FIFTH SON OF THE SHOEMAKER

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
THE PLIMPTON PRESS · NORWOOD · MASS.

TO THE TRUE CINDERELLE
FOR WHOM ALL TALES
ARE WRITTEN
AND LITTLE SHOES MADE
WHETHER OF CRYSTAL
OR OF GOSSAMER
OR EVEN OF THE STOLEN
FABRIC OF FACT
MAY SHE NEVER LOSE
THAT OTHER SLIPPER
OF GLASS

FOR the Eft-Princess took the one-footed Giant's wooden shoe while he slept, and the Poet-fool made her a ship of it, with a sail all of silk-sewn sea-birds' wings, and a mast of the Giant's dog-wand, and a lantern bent of the Giant's sugar-spoon, and they set sail in it out of the Harbour of Duress, quite without a rudder.

"But the one-footed Giant without his wooden shoe could not run after them, and without his dog-wand could not beat up a storm against them . . . and without his sugar-spoon could not fling hail after them. . . .

"And their silken stitches held the wind well, in the sail of sea-birds' wings, and their lantern shone . . . sufficingly . . . and the Poet-fool could sing, and the Eft-Princess knew how to listen . . . passably. . . .

"And quite without a rudder they came to a pleasant Port-of-Tarry, and lingered there. . . .

"But of their tale there is no ending . . . little doves and falcons . . . but I would tell it to you if I could."

—*Old Norcisle Firetale*

CONTENTS

The title page and the jacket design are from drawings by the Author

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Spring in Orchard Street . . .	1
II	New Red Shoes and Old Roubles of Silver	17
III	The Insecure Heart of Toralinda the Puppet	25
IV	Every Race Deserves the Dolls that it Makes of Itself	35
V	Too Large a Bite of an Apple of the Hesperides	45
VI	" One Journeys Always in the Prison of the Sun in Search of One's Tomb. Once there, One Arranges the Time According to One's Pleasure "	55
VII	Two Musicians to Closed Doors . . . Carrousels . . . and Estates in Thrace	65
VIII	If You Rob the One You Love, You Rob Yourself	75
IX	How it is to be an Octave Taller . .	87
X	The Party of Anushka the Muscovite .	97
XI	For Every Woman who is Cinderella in Her Heart, and for Every Woman who Ever Wept for Love . . .	105
XII	A Gnome of Longacre Square Comes to Orchard Street with Gold, Thinking to Purchase with it What is Never for Sale	117
XIII	Gold was Once Not the Price, nor the Penalty. nor the Scourge of Living, but	

CONTENTS

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CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Spring in Orchard Street . . .	1
II	New Red Shoes and Old Roubles of Silver	17
III	The Insecure Heart of Toralinda the Puppet	25
IV	Every Race Deserves the Dolls that it Makes of Itself	35
V	Too Large a Bite of an Apple of the Hesperides	45
VI	" One Journeys Always in the Prison of the Sun in Search of One's Tomb. Once there, One Arranges the Time According to One's Pleasure "	55
VII	Two Musicians to Closed Doors . . . Carrousels . . . and Estates in Thrace	65
VIII	If You Rob the One You Love, You Rob Yourself	75
IX	How it is to be an Octave Taller . .	87
X	The Party of Anushka the Muscovite .	97
XI	For Every Woman who is Cinderella in Her Heart, and for Every Woman who Ever Wept for Love	105
XII	A Gnome of Longacre Square Comes to Orchard Street with Gold, Thinking to Purchase with it What is Never for Sale	117
XIII	Gold was Once Not the Price, nor the Penalty, nor the Scourge of Living, but	

	Only the Sun Shining on a Beautiful Wall	123
XIV	"Close the Eyes, Please — if you would have Glasses of Crystal"	131
XV	Tribute to the Four Grim Horsemen	143
XVI	Concerning the Complex Personality of Tukkim	149
XVII	Out of the Fragrance of Churches . . . and Ships . . . and Seraglios	155
XVIII	The Proud Shoulders of Diana of Ephesus	161
XIX	In Defence of Humans Doing What they Like to Do	171
XX	The First Farewell Prepares us Somewhat . . . for All the Others	179
XXI	Sea-gulls Always Sing of Other Ships . . . Other Voyages . . . Other Seas	195
XXII	The Abduction of the Cobbler and the Fifth Son	199
XXIII	African Marble Out of an Old Quarry	205
XXIV	It is Easy to Climb an Old Grape-vine . . . if There is a Balcony at the Top of it	211
XXV	"I Love"	219
XXVI	The Stability of the Floating Island of Laputa	225
XXVII	One Cannot Be Said to have Arrived if One has Only Reached a Locked Gate	231
XXVIII	"I have Run Too Long upon the Wind without a Holiday"	241
XXIX	"It was Reckoned, in Antique Times, Extremely Dangerous to Encounter a Demi-god after Sunset"	251
XXX	The Machinations of the Arachnidae	261
XXXI	"And a Bird Snatched the Talisman out of His Hands and Flew Away with It"	267
XXXII	Promises and Farewells and Forebodings and Overtones	273
XXXIII	Aria da Capo . . . Con Amore	277

Chapter I

SPRING IN ORCHARD STREET

CHAPTER I

It was Spring in Orchard Street. The push-cart men proclaimed it with flowers whose stems were wound with wire, flowers whose hectic, drooping gaiety had been stimulated with stale aspirin. Flowers as yet too fragile to withstand the vicissitudes of Commerce.

The very whistles on the East River seemed to be sounding the exultant note of it. The children dancing in the littered street to the piping of a wheezy hurdy-gurdy had heard the magical echo from that far Olympian slope where Spring is born, and their toil-weary mothers thought of buying an apple, or a tawdry carnation . . . a bit of lace, even. For the carnations, and the lace, and the people, too, of Orchard Street, had all served a gentler time elsewhere in the world . . . behind the plate-glass windows of florists, when none would buy; in the shops of The Little Elegant Streets, uptown . . . in gentler cities South of the Carpathians, West of the Volga, or in the heart of Little Russia itself. For a curious gaiety without reason possesses Orchard Street on a day of Spring, as it possesses any living street of any city . . . it does things to people.

Ivan Mestravvik the cobbler sighed as he finished mending a child's shoe, once more rendered street-

worthy by a nail, two stitches and two thumps of his stubby hammer.

The little girl who waited for the shoe, standing on one foot like a restless crane, took it and put it on, stamped with approval, and extracted, reluctantly, five pennies from her apron pocket.

But Ivan the cobbler waved them aside and touched his lips significantly with his thumb and forefinger, which the child readily understood to mean that she was to buy candy instead, so she raced up the cellar stairs without ceremony towards that end.

For it was well-known in Orchard Street that Ivan would never take money from a child.

Hence his clients were many.

And Ivan sighed again, for the magic of Spring had seeped into his cellar unawares and caught hold on him as it catches hold on every living thing. In the corner his little boy, Pyotr, sighed also, for between them existed that queer something that has no name; when Ivan was hungry Pyotr was also; when Ivan whistled, so did Pyotr, and hardly ever was speech necessary between them.

Pyotr was cutting some tiny bits of coloured leather with a thin sharp knife on a board, and was whistling an improvised tune — timidly, because he could not whistle very well as yet. And Ivan echoed the little vagrant tune, absently, and made some perfectly useless holes in a piece of leather with his awl.

Pyotr had begun to whistle when the little girl came in, for he had seen her dancing in the street that morning while loitering on an errand. And she had seen that he saw her, and the tune had been his

way of letting her know that he saw that, too. For Pyotr was seven, and saw many things on the way to and fro on errands for leather, and for wax, and to deliver mended shoes to people, before and after school . . . people who were too old to come for them.

Pyotr heard things also.

He had been listening to the whistles on the East River, and to the cry of *'vi — lets! vi — lets!,'* and to the clang of the street-car bells that told people to get out of the way, and to the junk-man's chimes that hung on a strap between two sticks over his cart (to let you know he was coming, and no one else, and to have your junk ready, iron and brass and leather and old clothes, too). And Pyotr had been listening to the hurdy-gurdy that always stood outside the shop three times a week at four o'clock to play for the old man who lived and did nothing on the top floor of Pyotr's house. He could be counted on for two pennies, no more. One penny when the hurdy-gurdy man had played his first tune, and one penny when he had played the other one.

The old man sometimes gave Pyotr a penny for bringing him a newspaper from the corner, and sometimes a penny for no reason at all that Pyotr could see, so he liked the old man.

Pyotr heard all these things, including the tap-tap of the old man's stick as he went by, for he was always going out, and forgetting what he went for, and then coming back, looking anxiously along the street for something and never finding it. Pyotr heard all the sounds that made up the day in Orchard Street.

He liked the *dunk-dunk* of his father's thick hammer on tough leather, the tinkle of steel nails in the tin box when the shoemaker reached for them, the quick footsteps on the sidewalk just above their heads. For the cellar window was low, and showed only people's feet as they passed.

And Pyotr dreamed at night that if you could put all these sounds together somehow, it would make a much better hurdy-gurdy, only there would be canary-birds singing in it, and the whir of the Elevated going by in the next street, and the singing of steel hammers on the anvil across the way, where they put shoes on horses . . . big, solid horses who held each foot patiently to be nailed, but with a wondering look on their wide faces, however.

Somewhere, Pyotr knew, was a shop where cats came to get shoes put on, but not with nails. Sealing-wax. Only he could never catch one to see. And when he asked Ivan about it, the old man only smiled, and said that the cats never wore their shoes except at night, or when it rained. Otherwise they would wear out too soon, and their parents would not buy them any more, for cats had a great many children.

Pyotr heard smaller sounds, also, like the flies droning on a window-pane early in the morning. On Sunday mornings, particularly, when the world is very still. It was surprising how many sounds there were to hear in this world, where everything seemed to have its own little song.

And at night he dreamed of them, and tried to remember how they went, and this was the way he dreamed of his big hurdy-gurdy, and how it would be:

I-ee — I-ee. Dunk. Dunk.
Oom-a snarr-rr. . . . Oom-a snarr . . . mischa — gischa . . . gong. Dunk. Dunk.
Ring-a-hama . . . ring-a-hama . . . ring-a-hama. Dunk. Dunk.
Shree — shree — I-ee. Dunk. Dunk.
Scramm. Jangg. Jongg. Jungg.
Plopity-plap . . . plickity-plap . . . plickity-plopity-plicksy-plap. Dunk. Dunk.
Vi-lets. Vilets — wheer — wheer — wheer . . . dunk . . . dunk.
Tapenkeller, tippenkeller, tuppenkeller, tap-top, swimpen-madder, scrimpenscaller, scoppen, skit-teree-ee. Plong. Dunk. Dunk. I-ee-ee . . . I-ee. . . .
Oom-a snarr . . . Irrensnarr . . . liggen-laggen lokk-slap . . . loiten . . . lappen . . . lansmelt. Lippen-lattin-lurten-slock. Jongg. . . . Dunk. Dunk.
Whirren . . . whirren . . . whirren-elli-norren-plitt. I-ee . . . I-ee. Dunk. Dunk.
Blo — n — gg!

All these things and others Pyotr thought and heard, and tried to whistle, as he pared his bits of leather, red and gold, and fitted them by some minute patterns that Ivan had made for him.

For Pyotr was making his first pair of shoes, for the doll that hung on a nail near his father's head, the doll that Ivan had made for him out of this and that — a dancing-doll named Petrouchka. A puppet.

"You have to be t'e shoemaker for Petrouchka," his father had said, a week ago, when the doll first dangled on a string above his eyes when he woke up. It was the morning of his seventh birthday, and for some time Pyotr thought he was dreaming, until

Petrouchka kicked him gently on the chin, and he reached up and caught him, and knew he was real.

For Petrouchka had a feather in his cap, and a lute made of a pill-box and a red pencil, with steel nails for pegs. He had a sword, too, to fight when people wouldn't let him play his lute. And a pocket, with money in it. Square money, made of tin, but quite good enough for a lute-player to have.

But Petrouchka didn't have any shoes.

And once more Ivan told him the story of the ballet in Moscow, and how *his* father had made all the ballet's shoes for them, and had made dolls for each of his children when they were seven, and how he himself had learned first to make shoes by making them for the dolls. And the ballet-women had come to buy dolls from his father, to learn new steps by, and so he had made dolls, and his father, shoes, a long time, in their little shop in Neglenny Street. And he told Pyotr that the grandfather had been so famous in Moscow that even the Czaritza had come to him once, long ago, and her doll had lost one shoe, dancing too late, like Cinderella; and the old man had made her another one, all in a minute . . . and also, a pair of new ones . . . boots, to wear in the snow . . . green leather, with red heels. . . .

"They were wonderful," said Ivan, simply.

Pyotr looked up at the doll now. 'Yes, Petrouchka's shoes *had* to be red, to go with his green jacket and his silver cap!' (The cap was made out of the glue-pot lid and some red sealing-wax, and the feather had come out of the duster, but Pyotr did not think of that. Silver was silver to him, and feathers were what birds flew with, though he had

never seen any, except sea-gulls, and they seemed hardly to fly. There are no birds in Orchard Street, except in the canary-shop window, and they do not fly there). It is not permitted to birds on duty to be looked at by the public, to fly. Ivan had once explained that to him.

Then he looked over at his father, to see what he was doing.

Ivan sat leaning his elbows on his knees, dreaming, as he stared up at the window. And he was thinking: 'Will they pass today? — The beautiful feet . . . the two little black swallows against the sky . . . the two feet that always seemed to dance to wherever they were going, and hardly to touch the sidewalk? Surely they should pass today! '

For it was the end of the afternoon, and work grew stale to Ivan. It was pleasant to sit and dream a little, to remember Spring in Moscow, long ago, to remember the beautiful princesses who came to his father's shop . . . princesses in a cloud of lavender perfume . . . patchouli . . . violet . . . princesses who drove in carriages sometimes, with three horses abreast, and sometimes in *troikas,* with many bells of silver ringing in the frozen street. . . .

He could hear them still, those tiny bells. And in his memory the beautiful princesses of the ballet danced into his father's shop to see if their ballet slippers were ready, all soft and pliant as they should be . . . while he sat shyly in a corner, even as his little Pyotr was now, waiting for something . . . somebody . . . to come. . . .

And one of them had given him a ring one day, a silver ring with a blue stone in it, and had said some-

thing to him in French that he did not understand. And she had given him a kiss as well. The first kiss that he could remember. He still had that ring, and somehow, he had the kiss, too, still . . . on a Spring day.

And Somebody *had* come, finally, when he was nearly thirty . . . a princess on a white horse that had gone lame with a loose pebble in his shoe. And he had helped her down, and led the horse to the farrier in the next street, while she sat talking with his father. . . .

And her name was Radiana, or so she said, then, and her hair was as black as black velvet, and her nose straight and thin and white, and her mouth full and red like a pomegranate opened by the sun. And her eyes golden and sparkling, but gentle, like dogs' eyes. . . .

And she was not a Russian princess at all, but a Roumanian, from very far south, where they always paint a little red flower in the corner of the white door of the house where a beautiful girl lives . . . so that everyone may know it, and look for her in the street. And he had not needed to ask her if there was a flower on the white door of *her* house!

How long ago it was, in the Spring. . . . Yesterday!

And Radiana, whose true name was Ilsa, was one of the wardrobe mistresses in the Theatre, and the white horse belonged to the Première Danseuse, and she had been riding him to exercise when she had happened into Neglenny Street . . . the way things happen in this world. . . . Not too often, though, does anything beautiful happen. . . .

And a year later she had said she would marry him, and she did, and they had danced all night as they do in Roumania . . . and . . .

The old man rubbed his eyes. How things come and get you on a Spring day! And all because some beautiful feet had passed his cellar window one day, weeks ago . . . and beautiful feet are rare in Orchard Street. They had made him think of Radiana, who had had very beautiful feet.

Many feet passed Ivan's window, dancing feet, and sad feet, and reluctant ones, too. He knew which were going to meet a lover, and which dragged on the way to the pawn-shop, the sordid temple of the very poor, and which carried a burdened heart . . . and which loitered, and had no errand to do . . . and which had nowhere to go whatever . . . and no hope.

For Ivan knew the quality of people's feet; he could feel the delicacy of them, the arch, the narrow heel, the grace of their movements. For he had had to look at feet all of his life, and know them, as a sculptor knows . . . and as a poet also. He knew the feet of everyone in his street — not the men so much, for they did not interest him. They were flat, and weary, and only useful.

But all his life he had dreamed of making slippers, wondrous and magical slippers; high-arched and foolish slippers of silver and gold and red; slippers of satin, and of soft, pliant skins — and even of brocade, as his father had made them before him in Moscow.

But with a wife and four boys to feed, it had never been possible in Neglenny Street, after his father

died. And then the ballet had moved to St. Petersburg, leaving them no custom. And having heard magical legends of New York, and of the gold that lay in the streets there, they had one day taken a ship, and left Russia. And Pyotr had been born at sea, in a storm north of the Hebrides, seven years ago. . . . How Time ran on! And Alexey and Sergey and Gavril and Nicolai were all growing up . . . and had jobs . . . and Pyotr was making his first pair of shoes! Maybe . . . after a little while . . . *he* could have some fun once more. . . . Radiana had died five years ago, and it was Spring again, and time heals things a little. . . .

For this all happened before sorrow had come to the world . . . before the War, whose evil eddies have gone into the depths of every human heart, to every backwater of the world, claiming toll of the future. . . .

And Ivan, lost in his dreaming, reached under his work-bench and brought out a cardboard box. Very tenderly he took out of it an unfinished slipper of red Cossack leather, soft as cloth, and then another. . . . Only the heels to be stitched and the buckles to be added, and they would be finished. And he set to work on them, forgetting the day's tasks, the mending, the heeling, soling, stitching, patching . . . forgot that he was getting to be an old man . . . forgot everything except the beauty he had wrought into these fragile slippers.

He hardly wondered if they would fit. He knew they would. He never had to measure. None of his fathers had ever measured. They *looked* once, and *knew!* And he had seen those two twinkling light

feet many times since the last of the winter's snows had left the street, and the plop-plop of goloshes had ceased. Those two feet did not belong to Orchard Street — he knew that — he had not wondered who the lady was who went by so quickly. To him she was some dream lady out of a fairy-tale. Those feet were so slim, so beautifully fashioned, that from the first he had wished to make some slippers for them to fly in. Those the princess wore, of black satin, or patent leather, sometimes suede, albeit good, were not good enough, for such fairy feet. They were too thick of heel, too low of arch, too loose at the sides. These things he had seen at first glance.

And now he examined the red slippers critically, as an artist who has laid some work by for several days will, to see where it is short of that perfection towards which he has striven. 'Three more long nails in the leather heels,' he said to himself, for those heels were very high, and made of many thicknesses of good leather on a wooden spline.

'*Dunk-dunk*' went the stubby hammer, for the ease and safety of the mythical princess' heel.

And at the familiar sound Pyotr, in the corner, took up his tiny hammer, and the sound of it, '*tunk-tunk*,' echoed the other; and Ivan smiled to himself, for the doll Petrouchka's heels had to be easy, too.

Ivan whistled as he stitched at the buckles of those red shoes.

And Pyotr, stitching upon the miniature ones, whistled also.

And a great peace possessed the cobbler's shop, for these two comprehended each other.

For so had the family of Skorniakof-Tassarev —

now Mestravvik — always been: Pyotr was the fifth son of Ivan, who was the fifth son of old Nicolai — but no one had ever known much about *him,* except that he was a Tartar, and given to little speech.

Skorniakof-Tassarev had been too long a name to go across the tin sign, blue and gold, that hung outside the Orchard Street shop; that many letters cost too much, and Radiana, the thrifty (as she had turned out to be), but resourceful, also, had persuaded Ivan to use her name, Mestravvik, instead. What did it matter? No one knew them in New York. It was a fine name in Roumania, and here people were impatient of long names . . . suspicious! Ivan had pleaded to use Tassarev, half of his name; but somehow, Radiana always got what she wanted. But she had been pleased that he shyly asked the sign-painter to put a little red flower in the corner of that sign!

'But we have no duaghter!' she had protested.

'Some day . . .' he had suggested, but that had made her weep, for she had borne too many children already. And then he had told her *she* was the beautiful daughter of her father, and his name was there for everyone to read, and Radiana had kissed him . . . remembering a white door in her village . . . the square stone house . . the proud pine trees . . . the little stream . . . the leather hats of contending lovers that lay on the grass, while they went into the forest to fight for her . . . with knives. . . .

The heels were finished, and the buckles sewn on — beautiful old brass buckles from the harness of a *troika,* that Ivan had treasured for a long time.

As he polished them on his sleeve there was a commotion on the pavement above his head.

The other boys were coming home. Their feet rattled down the stone steps.

Hastily he hid the slippers under the bench. And as hastily Pyotr secreted the doll's shoes in his pocket. And the two looked at each other and laughed. Conspirators. For they knew that such folly, to Alexey and Sergey, to Gavril and Nicolai, would cause laughter.

Their mother had been a little like that, too, since they had not found any gold in the streets of New York . . . (other people having been there before them). The boys were not to blame. Radiana had always wanted Ivan to be rich, to give up being a cobbler and take a shop . . . to sell things, mek' money . . . then move up town and be happy.

'You hav' to *sell* things in New York, to be happy,' she had often said to him. 'You cannot only *mek'* things, Ivan Nicolaivitch, and be happy!'

Chapter II

NEW RED SHOES AND OLD ROUBLES OF SILVER

CHAPTER II

The boys burst in. Alexey flung his cap on Pyotr's head, for he was the eldest, and the eldest always treats the youngest in that fashion, to keep the youngest from pride. And Alexey was twenty.

Pyotr removed the cap, without resentment. He was used to it.

Nicolai lighted the samovar on the table in the corner, and turned up the flaring gas-jet on the wall. Nicolai was like that.

Gavril, who carried a stick already, and smoked cigarettes, begun to whack the soles of the shoes hanging on their pegs under the window, just as he always did.

Sergey managed to upset the sardine-tin box of nails, just as he always did.

They all talked at once, as a Russian family, reconvened after the absence of a few hours, has to do, while Ivan patiently picked up the nails from the floor, Pyotr helping him.

They were good boys; they did not mean any harm.

Alexey, who sold shoes in the 'Seconds' place on Grand Street, had sold seventeen pairs that day; Sergey, who wrapped bundles in the hardware store three blocks away, had cut his finger, and had a lot

to tell about it. Blood, he had discovered, was purple, not red! Gavril, who was office-boy to the Maritime Passage Office and Money of All Countries Changed, Limited, on Delancey Street, had been down to see a new ship of the Lloyd Sabaudo Line, to take the Captain some papers. He had talked with the Captain, he said, and had a cup of coffee in the kitchen . . . 'big copper coffee pot, as large as a drum,' he explained with pride.

Nicolai, who had the humble job of cleaning fox-fur for a basement furrier down the street, had nothing to say. Fur makes for silence. But Sergey smiled always, as if he had had a good time. . . .

It was Friday night, and each of the boys went to the old yellow boot that hung on the wall by the chimney and put the money he had earned in it, without accounting. It was the old custom of the Skorniakof-Tassarevs. That old boot, brought from Tartary by their great-grandfather, had hung on the wall in Moscow, and no one ever asked how much any one else put into it, or took out of it. It was for the good of the state, that boot.

But the rent was paid out of it, and leather and findings were bought out of it, and food was bought out of it. And when any one of the six needed money — unless for the grave purpose of clothes — he went and took it, without question. Was it not all theirs?

'The boot will pay,' was the old family jest, whatever was needed, for it had never completely failed them, in eighty years. It was such a system of the common good that enabled Genghis Khan to maintain his fabulous army. It was the very basis of the clan system.

When clothes had to be bought, that was the subject of council, deliberation, weight of opinion, that concerned all the boys. For being of disparate ages, and all growing, Alexey, being tallest, as well as eldest, had the first wearing, then Nicolai, Gavril, and Sergey, as time passed. Pyotr, being too many pegs below them all, had to have especial consideration, since Radiana was no longer there to make suits over for him. And while this procedure necessarily made Alexey feel the head of the family (for Ivan's clothes were somehow never bought. They came out of the old chest upstairs, that had brought all their family goods from Moscow), he was very tolerant, if Nicolai voted for a blue suit that *he* was to get the following year, or if Gavril had a preference in the matter of buttons. For Alexey had a vision for the family, built up out of seven years in New York . . . some day they would all have their clothes made for them! But this he never spoke of to anyone.

It was true that before Radiana had died, she had kept the yellow boot hidden somewhere, and Ivan had given her his earnings to put into it, and asked for what he needed for the shop . . . for he had no needs for himself . . . but since the four elder boys had all been working since they left school severally at sixteen, the boot hung on the wall again, and was the bank.

On occasion, to be sure, it had to be shaken and thumped to yield enough for the event, in the hollow leather seat of the cobbler's bench, but being a very old boot, it had pockets in it, and a torn lining as well, and yield it did, like the lamp of Aladdin.

And even little Pyotr, when he found a penny in the street, as sometimes happened, would bring it home and put it in the boot, and carefully shake it down to the toe.

For it was more fun to take money out of the boot for candy, without question (since your fingers might bring out a five-cent piece instead), than it was to spend treasure-trove. Pyotr had an idea that pennies put into the boot somehow became five-cent pieces, or even roubles of silver, somehow.

It was Alexey who spied the slippers beneath the bench, the fairy slippers that Ivan had not had time to conceal.

He was looking at them critically when Ivan straightened up with the last of the spilt nails, and he was not laughing, either.

"Where'd you get these, my Father?" he asked.

"They are . . . for a lady," Ivan quavered; "an o'der."

"You mean she brought them to make by?" persisted Alexey, still contemplating them with interest.

"No. . . . I mek," said Ivan, quietly.

"Boys, see here — he *made* them!" shouted Alexey. "Why, they're wonderful, my Father! How much is she going to pay for them?"

"What lady?"

"Where did you get these leathers?"

"When will the lady come?"

They all questioned at once, spilling their tea everywhere, and with a respect that they had never had since before they all had jobs.

For the slippers were new in a world of high and clumsy shoes.

"She hav' not come yet to see them," Ivan stammered. "I mek no price on them. Maybe . . ."

He did not know what to say.

"Why, I could get five-ninety on Grand Street for these!" exclaimed Alexey. "You must not mek shoes with no price, my Father. It is bad business! Six dollars you must ask for these."

"I hav' not think," said Ivan, "and ——"

But Pyotr, who had been watching keenly, suddenly reminded them all that Mrs. Petroff, their landlady, who cooked supper for them upstairs, had been ringing her tin-can bell for some time, and that Marya Mihailna, who was Mrs. Petroff's niece, and who helped her get supper after her work uptown, would be down to scold them for being late, as usual. Not that Marya scolded very severely. She was a pale, lovely girl, as reticent as a thrush in a thicket, with dark hair with purple lights in it, and eyes like a wounded doe's.

All four of the older boys had tried to make some headway with her for a long time, to take her to the movies, to go for walks with her . . . to no avail. '*Niet!*' she would say, almost gaily, to all their blandishments, 'your Father is my sweedheart, and Pyotr is my *little* sweedheart!' She often came down to talk or be silent with Ivan in the evening; she kept his clothes mended, despite all his protests. And she would go with Pyotr as far as the ice-cream place, and let him buy ice-cream 'out of the boot' for her, and sit dreamily without speaking. . . .

The boys, being reminded that they were hungry, tramped out, leaving Ivan to lock the door and take off his leather apron.

"You are a good boy, Petrouchka!" said he, tenderly.

And Pyotr smiled, and fingered the unfinished shoes in his pocket.

He understood.

But somehow, dumbly, he wished Alexey would not always see so much when he came in. . . .

Chapter III

THE INSECURE HEART OF TORALINDA THE PUPPET

CHAPTER III

EACH morning after that Ivan paid more attention than usual to his window, to all the feet that passed. The lady always went by at nine, and again at four, if she came at all.

The red slippers, wrapped in yellow tissue paper, were all ready, if she should ever come.

But how would she know that he had them?

And Ivan pondered the problem between the *dunk-dunks* of his hammer each day. For he had been caught in a trap of his sons' unconscious making. He had been enmeshed in a lie, and like most mortals in that predicament saw no escape short of telling another. And while in Ivan's simple philosophy a lie to save an embarrassment was no great sin, a lie planned and executed was heinous. He could not, therefore, hide the slippers and say the lady had called and taken them, leaving the yellow boot's anomalous and unreckoned balance to tell no tales. Ivan was in a quandary.

It was Alexey who solved it for him, Alexey, coming in one evening, asking as usual: "Lady come for her slippers yet?"

And as usual, Ivan replied: "*Niet* . . . *niet*. . . . No, not come."

Alexey straddled the end of the crowded bench, and upset the box of nails. Ivan patiently picked

them up. Whatever his sons did was all right; they were good boys; they always put money in the boot. There was a great deal of it there now; it was heavy each night when he carried it into the back room where he slept, to hang it inside the chimney on a nail. He did not know how much there was in it; he had never counted it. He would not have known if he had. Money was still roubles and kopecks to him.

Alexey began: " How much you pay for the leather for those shoe? "

" T'ree roubles."

His son calculated. " A dollar twenty. If you make some more like them I can sell them in the store. You make them quick, eh? "

Ivan shook his head. " Not quick."

" Well, anyway, you make. I sell. There is plenty money in the boot for leather. You make right away some? "

" *Da, da, da,*" said Ivan, meaning ' Yes, maybe.' (After all, though, he would like to make some more fabulous slippers, but ' not quick.' No, good work took time.)

Alexey continued.

" Your sign," he began, " it needs painting. We make it new, and then people come to order slippers."

And so it was done, at Alexey's urging and initiative. The tin sign that had rusted for so many years over the cellar door was taken to the sign-painter in Canal Street and repainted:

IVAN MESTRAVVIK
SHOEMAKER

Only Ivan, with some eagerness, insisted on having a delicate slipper painted in the corner; red on pale blue, and in the other corner a new flower to replace the faded one that had told the world that he had a beautiful wife; this time a geranium, which he went all the way to Delancey Street to buy for fifteen cents, so that the sign-painter could make it right.

A choice assortment of coloured leather was found by Alexey at a bargain, blue and gold and crimson and green; and the boot paid without losing its wrinkled Tartar countenance in the least.

No sooner was the sign hung one morning, and Ivan, happily embarked upon a new pair of slippers, golden with black heels, than a commotion arose in the street.

With the usual contempt for new paint, and with the enthusiasm of destructive critics for all that is fresh and new and strange, the little boys of Orchard Street were throwing carrots and other things at it.

It rang like a gong, to Pyotr's ears, a different sound from the rusty way the wind had rung it before, though he had liked that, too. It had been like a sea-gull's cry on gusty nights. Pyotr loved seagulls, down by the East River, where Ivan took him to walk sometimes . . . loved their restlessness, their swift circling in search of food . . . but most of all their strange, creaking cry. . . .

And then the miracle happened.

A high, clear voice, a woman's voice (like a canary to Pyotr), argued with the maurauders, sent them flying. And Ivan, looking up from his work, saw

the feet of the princess at the window. And his life-long shyness went from him. For had he not a new sign? Was he not now a Slipper-maker to Princesses once more?

"Pyotr! Pyotr! Go and ask the lady to come in," he called over his shoulder.

But the lady had already come, as Pyotr sprang to his feet. She stood there in the door, slim, beautifully dressed, smiling at them. Only Ivan did not see that she was beautiful; that she had merry grey eyes and a pointed chin and soft brown hair; he only saw her beautiful feet.

"The boys have ruined your new sign," she was saying. "I am sorry. We try to teach them at the Settlement House not to do things like that, but . . ."

And then she saw Pyotr, a thin dark child, staring at her, with eyes like large black olives.

"I don't know *you!*" she said (and Pyotr heard nightingales in a pine forest), "have you been here long?"

"We are some time here, but the sign is new," said Ivan, rising, and making a bow that he had never learned; it was natural to bow to ladies like this one. "This is my fif' son, Pyotr."

The lady's quick eyes took in the shop, the yellow boot on its peg, the neat row of mended shoes, the bench, the stove, the icon of St. George in the corner with its tiny oil lamp burning, the gleaming samovar, the row of polished brasses on a shelf, the huge copper kettle shaped like a pumpkin, and the bowing old man in a leather apron and a skull-cap. And finally she saw the doll on his string, hanging

where some stray reflected morning sunlight gilded his lute for him, proudly wearing the new shoes Pyotr had made.

" You made the doll? " she asked softly.

For wonderment had seized upon Miss Lucinda Parrish, of the Settlement House a few blocks away, and she became very much of a child at once.

Ivan motioned to Pyotr. " Bring t'e udder toll," he said.

And Pyotr brought the old wooden box carved with saints and dragons from the back room, and the lady opened it to find four dolls. For it had a worn key. A brass key, shining from being carried in Pyotr's pocket. For he was now custodian of 't'e toll,' since he was seven.

" *He* is Genghishka and *she* is Natalinka and *she* is Toralinda and *he* is Bobeshka — and *That* is Petrouchka! " said Pyotr, all in one breath, as she took them all out. Pyotr pointed at the wall, where Petrouchka hung boastfully in his blue cloak with that singularly limp but expectant look that a puppet has while hanging up . . . as if to say: ' Give me a chance, and I'll tell you a brave story of lovely ladies and gallant gentlemen! '

The princess glanced at her wrist-watch, perceiving that she was already late and might as well be later, and so turned the watch under her slim wrist, and devoted herself to the dolls.

For Toralinda had a pocket with a wisp of lace in it, and flaxen hair, and a crown, a little awry — (the princess straightened it) — and a necklace, and a golden ring, made of one link of an old chain, and Natalinka had a minute wooden bowl and a tin

spoon and red hair, and Bobeshka had a sword made of a bodkin and a helmet of pewter that somehow resembled the top of a salt-shaker, and Petrouchka had a long Asiatic gourd-lute slung about his shoulder — and a sword as well, to show he was not just a Troubadour — and Genghishka had little yellow boots and fierce moustachios and a thick little book made of Russian postage stamps, with covers of green leather, to show he was a scholar, and a crown made of copper wire on top of his velvet cap. . . . For sometimes he had to be king, even as Marcus Aurelius.

They all had various other accouterments and necessities in the wooden box. A minute samovar. A skillet. A box of bread. A bottle. A lantern. A jug. A coil of rope ending in an anchor. A box of tea. A little yellow boot containing money made of octagonal bits of tin and brass and copper. Two chairs upholstered in gilded leather. A roll of felt. A circular tent made like a Tartar yurt. A horse whose legs folded up. A cart also. An icon of St. George, and a bell, and some match-sticks for firewood, some pewter cups . . . a red and gold dragon, who despite his felt limpness had a truculent air. Even a haystack, with a very palpable needle sticking in it. (With a thread of course, to enable anyone to find it.)

They all had strings, neatly gathered and coiled against entanglement; blue for their heads, pink for their wrists, green for their toes, and black for their inanimate tackle. The two women had only a thread for the right hand — being, in Ivan's their maker's simple hierarchy, timider (which brought

a little flush to the princess' cheek). Toralinda had, unlike all the rest, a heart tucked into her bodice . . . with a red string.

'Ah!' said the princess to herself . . . 'she give it away, then, like all the rest of us!'

Chapter IV

EVERY RACE DESERVES THE DOLLS THAT IT MAKES OF ITSELF

CHAPTER IV

She was lost.

Odd bits of travel-trove came back to her; the royal box of state puppets in an old palace in Madrid . . . made to amuse an Infanta; the elaborate chests of 'little people,' mute and poignant, in almost every old family castle she had ever been in on the Continent . . . the dolls of the Egyptians and the Etruscans, by whose appurtenances we can reconstruct their pastimes — the most 'lost' of all a people's customs. . . .

All these things flitted through Lucinda's mind, for she had been to many places, read too much, been too much schooled . . . and here was the real thing, *fait accompli,* the race legend dwelling in a simple Russian family, and done into tangible form with an elaborateness that staggered her. And the salty comment of an old professor of ethnography came back to her, to fit into this occasion of her experience of the East Side, and Settlement work, and the endless Chinese egg intricacy of people: 'Every race deserves the dolls that it makes of itself. Consider the august transparent shadow-puppets of the Chinese . . . ghostly ancestors of the movie! And while the Chinese do not deserve the movie for their sins,' he had added, 'surely *we* do! '

And she fingered reverently the little silent people and their toys, and she had an odd feeling in her thyroid area . . . where, in some truth, perhaps, the Egyptians held the soul to reside like a winged butterfly, the first visitant to come . . . the first to depart.

And being deeply feminine, despite a year too much Vassar . . . and considerably too much Sorbonne, for anyone with a merry heart, . . . the Princess touched the dolls' hair to see if it was real, blond, or black, or red; took off the puppets' shoon and marvelled at their stitching . . . tried them on her thumbs . . . looked demurely to see what sort of petticoats Natalinka and Toralinda had, and gasped with delight, for Radiana had been a fine needlewoman, and had made all their clothes for them, even to their stockings, and had finished Petrouchka's romantic tailoring just before she died, against Pyotr's seventh birthday — all the other boys having had their mannequins at a similar age in Moscow, where a doll is, to a child of the people, infinitely more than a toy . . . being fabricated and bestowed to mark a phase of development; to make a tangible evocation of the endless folklore that swaddles a Russian child, and to enable them to dramatize their awakening life by very much the same modus operandi as the magicians who in all countries have had a familiar, a 'poppet,' a spiritual whipping-boy — lingering in the jester, a head and bells on a stick; an unconscious racial device . . . an *alter ego*, growing out of primitive 'identification' with the tree of the tribe — each member being a twig.

And old Ivan looked on at her wonderment with the pleased embarassment of the creator, for never had his puppets had so much open homage, and when she looked up, with the suspicion of tears in the corners of her eyes, and folded her inquisitive hands and waited as if a child said, 'Now . . . let's have the play,' Ivan with ready comprehension made the little people walk on his work-bench amid the litter there, made Natalinka dance, and Petrouchka sing — (Pyotr, as property man, playing upon a Jew's harp in the corner), just as they always did on Sunday evenings, alone, now that the boys had grown up, and sought the movies . . . damsels . . . or other charivari. And Pyotr was glad, for his Father never forgot to make the dragon swish his tail, when it was Bobeshka's turn to be St. George, nor to have Natalinka find the needle in the haystack and stab Toralinda with it — (and of course to leave the needle sticking in her chest for Genghishka the doctor to take out, and cure her of the effects of mortal jealousy). Ivan never forgot anything, like the true puppeteer that he was. His broad, heavy fingers, as supple as a pianist's from manipulating stiff leather into the round for forty years, deftly caused Natalinka to weep, in the traditional way, by laying her hand across her eyes, enabled Petrouchka to pluck his lute, and Genghishka to read in his book and turn the pages, and Toralinda to spill the samovar when Petrouchka appeared and broke her heart with his impassioned wooing. . . .

Ivan never forgot to be the Chorus, either, and make the necessary sounds . . . even to the creaking of the wheelbarrow.

And the Princess watched the mingled legend performed for her benefit, and clasped and unclasped her hands, and wished she had no job waiting for her.

The play was ended by Genghishka (who was Sergey's doll), upsetting the box of nails, as Sergey always did . . . only, this time, Ivan, with a sly look at their visitor, tweaked Toralinda's heart out of her bodice, and made her give it to Genghishka, who promptly shut it up in his book, and, disdainfully enough, stalked away from the fainting damsel with the supreme indifference of the scholar for frail and fickle womankind!

And the laughter of the Princess was, to Pyotr, like wine gurgling from the jug of the puppets . . . so soft, so almost soundless it was.

She gathered her gloves, her black satin purse, and her little package (without which no true woman ever seems to arrive anywhere), from where she had flung them when the puppets captured her, sought in the black satin recesses and found and put into Natalinka's pocket a very shining penny (so Pyotr thought), — really a gold dollar saved from childhood, when golden dollars were not thought unworthy coins to mint — found also a miniature rosary, which she placed around Toralinda's neck, tucking the crucifix into her bodice where her heart had been. Then she turned, reluctantly, to go.

The words: 'Can I come again?' were already on her lips, with the timidity of a child who has seen the great magic, and scarcely dares to hope that she can have it again, when her eyes fell on the

unfinished golden slippers that Ivan had been making that morning.

She gasped again, as even princesses will, at the unexpected.

"You make *slippers,* too?" she asked.

"*Da, da,*" said Ivan, shyly. "Yes, I mek."

"Would you make me some?" she asked, "red, with *very* high heels? *So* high?" (Showing her parted finger and thumb).

Ivan nodded.

"I hav' here some," he said, with a lump in his throat.

The great moment had come.

He leaned over and took out the yellow tissue package and gave it to her.

The Princess opened it in haste.

That wrist-watch that was turned under her wrist was ticking violently. It may have been her pulse. For pulses were given us to know great moments by, since wrist-watches do not always warn us in a purely sidereal universe.

This Lucinda had had a childhood, not too far distant, and filled with unrealized dreams. And here was one unfolding on her knees.

"They are red!" she exclaimed, suddenly, "and did the buckles come from China?"

And Ivan felt his cheeks flush under her gaze, as she beamed upon him.

Pyotr added nightingales to his hurdy-gurdy. For the Princess was babbling nameless sounds in his ears, such as a pleased nightingale might make if presented with new wings. Red wings. Sounds like: 'too — too ad — or — able — darling shoes — dar-

ling — Cinderella — fairy — shoes — ' And she was slipping her long narrow hands into them to see how soft they were, fingering the heels, noticing with delight the tiny silver bells hung in the high arches. She jingled them gaily, she rubbed her cheeks with them, and turned to Ivan, who was already a little troubled, as is the way of poets with princesses. (Perhaps, after all, American princesses did not like such shu'!)

" Can I — can you . . . make me some like these? " she asked. " I must have some."

" I mek for you," said Ivan proudly, " I see your feet go by my window, many day, and I think you hav' such beautiful feet you need fine slipper for them! My father, he mek shu' for te dancers in Moscow, and me, when I can, I mek, too! You dance? "

The princess flushed a little. She understood the simplicity of such open admiration, for she had grey eyes and a merry heart, and small time for thinking of the Unimportant Things. And no one had ever paid her such high homage, though she herself knew, demurely, that her feet were Greek, and as lovely as a marble *relief*.

" They would make a wooden woman dance! " she exclaimed, warmly. " They are two sonnets . . ." she added, but Ivan only smiled.

Lucinda looked at Pyotr again. He had begun to put the dolls away in their box, with all their tackle.

" And does your little boy make slippers also? " she asked, noticing that Pyotr was dusting Petrouchka's shoes on his sleeve, with great pride.

" Always the younges' son, the fif' son, in my fam-

ily, he mek shu' for toll firs'. That is the way we learn. My gran'fath' mek shu' for te Czaritza's toll. I am fif' son, the same."

"How much are the slippers?" asked the Princess.

"I did not mek to sell. I mek for pleasure. I giv' to you," said Ivan.

And Lucinda, being a princess, accepted them.

For it is only the truly royal in this world who know how to accept without embarassment to the donor or themselves. It is almost a lost gift of the gods.

She also knew, which fewer still understand, that one must never stop the giving of another.

But Pyotr knew that, and very gravely, when Lucinda was gone, took the gold dollar out of Natalinka's pocket and put it in the dolls' yellow boot . . . for Natalinka might lose it.

He gave her some tin money to spend, however, in mere equity.

Chapter V

TOO LARGE A BITE OF AN APPLE OF THE HESPERIDES

CHAPTER V

And being truly royal Lucinda was not long in making some return of largesse in her own fashion. She came, in fact, one evening, and offered to the boys all the wealth of the Indies; to be had, she explained, through the open doors of the Settlement House three blocks away.

And she questioned them each in turn, Alexey and Sergey and Nicolai and Gavril, as to which particular treasure of the Indies his heart desired, seated like a sibyl on Ivan's work-bench.

Alexey, who wanted to be a great merchant, was assured that he could learn the open sesame of merchantship there; and Sergey, who shyly voiced his desire to be the Captain of a ferry-boat — preferably plying between Staten Island and the Battery, that being farther than the others — was likewise assured that he could learn navigation if he chose, although Lucinda pointed out that even Captains of ferry-boats had to know how to spell, more or less. Wouldn't they all come to the evening classes and acquire some of the attributes of being Americans?

For Lucinda believed in her settlement house and in its influence, as a religion, and she was not yet old enough to have seen the ironic truth that lies in a certain pithy inscription across the façade of one

of the great Customs Houses of the world, to the effect that: "He who would bring back the wealth of the Indies had better take the wealth of the Indies with him."

For to her, out of her boundless tenderness for thirsty young souls, the Settlement represented a vast bunch of silver keys that could not fail to unlock many doors and swing wide many gates. And so, like a royal personage with fiefs and forests and manors and abbeys within her gift she opened for Nicolai the vista of drawing, for that was what he wanted to do.

Gavril, being pressed, caused even Ivan to chuckle, for the ambition of Gavril was to be a cat-meat man, and to go from house to house with a little red cart, and to bring joy and peace and liver and fried fish to the great tribe of the hungry, as well as to the nomads who prowl in all places in search of sustenance; like Bedouins in shadowy deserts, like the ragged clansmen of that proud Scot who refused to sign the Covenant with all the rest of the chieftains, and took the dale for their home and the sky for their roof. For their pride of poverty is only equalled by their insolence, despite the invitation of the Mayor of Paris, that an army of the cats of New York be expeditioned, as a subsidiary Foreign Legion, at one sou *per diem* each, to rid the ancient city of *Lutetia* of its rats — which same *apaches* had grown bolder than ever, thanks to the war and the impoverishment of the vitality though not the courage, of the French *gendarmerie* of the alleys. (This, of course, as a gracious international courtesy in memory of Lafayette.

But mobilization proved too difficult, it was found.)

But in Orchard Street people love their cats, and even other people's cats, somewhat.

And Lucinda, equal to all occasions, pointed out to him that to be a cat-meat man, one had to know the rudiments of arithmetic, and somewhat concerning weights and measures and calories — and vitamines, too, and where could he better learn these things than at the Settlement?

To all of which Ivan uttered from time to time: "*Da, Da, Da,*" the Russian's syllables of accord, approval, agreement, though he comprehended little of what Lucinda was saying. But his simple heart had accepted her with implicit faith, and he came of the school that could never believe that a beautiful woman could enact anything but beauty.

And so it was agreed that they should all come the following evening to be enrolled and to begin their careers, for none of them except Pyotr had ever been to school, except in Moscow, and Lucinda's warm heart saw them as being armed presently with practical weapons with which to fend with Things in New York, remorseless windmills, as she knew, to shiver all the lances one had. . . .

In going away she gave one searching glance about the dim cellar, and made out Pyotr's eyes shining in the corner like a cat who had successfully located some herring and the way to get it. For he had divined that she had a purpose in leaving him out of the discussion.

"But you can come in the afternoon, can't you, Pyotr?"

For Lucinda knew that Pyotr would have to be drawn out, as to what argosy he would like to embark upon, and she sensed the slightly inimical tension between him and Alexey, and felt that the latter would be contemptuous of Pyotr's ambition, whatever it might be.

And Pyotr heard canaries in thickets, heard the sibyl indeed, heard loving-kindness in the soft contralto of Lucinda, for he knew that she knew he could not speak in the presence of the others of the secret that was lodged in his throat like too large a bite of an apple.

And so he only smiled at her with all his heart.

The door had barely closed upon her before Alexey had taken the work-bench for a forum, kneeling behind it, with a pencil behind his ear.

"It's this way, gentlemen," he expatiated, grandiosely. "First, I have a shop. You wish to buy nailz, Mister Krupershinsky? I sell you nailz as a great favour. I tell you you hav' seen my nailz advertis' everywhere. I tell you I sell nailz in Russia, in Poland, in West Milwaukee, in Palms Beach, in Fourteenth Street. You think my nailz are very fine. You tell other peoples. Other peoples come and I say I hav' no nails. The market has taken all of them. In this way they think my nailz are very fine indeed. What! they say, here is a nailz-merchant who cannot keep enough nailz to sell? We will pay more, to hav' your nailz, they say. So soon I am rich. I do not sell nailz any more. I sell shoes. I make so many shoes I can sell cheaper than anyone. I make with machine. But I tell them all the same: you cannot have my shoes every day.

You have to buy them last week before I make them. . . ."

"And they buy!" Alexey concluded, stretching up his arms and leaning backward. In so doing he knocked down the whole row of mended shoes hanging on the wall, even as Alnaschar kicked over his basket of glassware, lost in a vision of fortune. Everyone laughed.

So dreamed Alexey.

And the others, less articulate, went to sleep that night each bound upon his own fabulous emprise: Sergey deftly conducting his ferry-boat through wild storms, field glasses in hand and a megaphone somewhere shaped like a cornucopia . . . people drowning, while he threw them life-preservers like great white doughnuts . . . everyone calling to him from the water to ask him how you spell 'Captain,' and on the other side of the Bay a tall, dark girl named Marya coming to meet him at the dock; Nicolai, with much white paper and many sharpened pencils moved by unseen hands, drawing engines and grindstones and electric fans and snowploughs and big wheels and little monkeys to his heart's content.

Gavril went up and down the mountains of the world and across the steppes and down into the depths of the Sea in his two-wheeled cart, bringing cheer to tigers, cat-meat and pink candy to other wild beasts, all of whom gravely put a piece of money into the little box at the front of the cart, and no questions asked. Only sometimes, the two-wheeled cart became a gipsy wagon with three horses wearing high wooden collars and lots of balls. And they went like a whirlwind over the mountains, and across

the steppes. And under the wagon hung three things: an axe and a copper kettle and a frying-pan. Gavril himself lay snugly asleep in one of the bunks built into the wagon. The horses guided themselves. And of course, after awhile they stopped, at a little square house on the edges of a forest, and a beautiful dark princess named Maruska lived there. . . .

And then the wagon would become a sleigh, still with three horses, whose sharp hooves struck stars out of the frozen road. And they went down into the Sea, and the horses could swim — only they didn't have to; you drove right down the sloping floor of the Sea, where there were roads and mile-posts and queer trees and castles, just like up above, only it was warmer. And you built a fire down there, and you boiled your kettle, and you cooked liver for the cat-fish, just the same as you did on land for the cats.

And sometimes you went through the air with three white birds with high wooden collars, hitched to a ship that had wings, too — wings that you raised or lowered with pulleys and tackle, to go higher or lower — and your axe and your kettle and your frying-pan sounded just as jolly as ever, hung up somewhere. . . . But the little girl who worked in the candy-shop on the corner of Grand Street was there, too, saying: 'Yes, it *is* a nice day. . . .'

Only sometimes . . . it was Marya Mihailna.

So Gavril.

Pyotr, who always dreamed anyway, could not have been so explicit, for Pyotr was one of those people who did not dream of things. He saw colours, he heard sounds, he smelled beautiful flowers. And

he had the feeling in his sleep also that you have when you have taken too large a bite of an apple or something, and thought of something else far away when you tried to swallow it. Pyotr was that way.

And Ivan, if he dreamed, dreamed of peace, for he had lived a very long time.

And so Miss Lucinda Parrish happened to the household of the Skorniakof-Tassarevs . . . known as Mestravvik.

Chapter VI

"ONE JOURNEYS ALWAYS IN THE PRISON OF THE SUN, IN SEARCH OF ONE'S TOMB. ONCE THERE, ONE ARRANGES THE TIME ACCORDING TO ONE'S PLEASURE"

CHAPTER VI

LUCINDA came the following afternoon and took Pyotr to the Settlement House, and asked him what he would like to do there, interviewing the sensitive, taciturn child in the choicest reception-room, where flowers and rare Japanese prints, beautiful books and dignified Italian furniture might invite the most timid of young souls to emerge. For Lucinda's complex daily task at the House was The First Contact, and she always chose her *mise en scène* with care. Her deep maternal passion, the strongest web in the fabric of her, craved to induce the liberation of the souls of the avid, nervous, sharply alive children of her East Side. She yearned to be present at their spiritual birth . . . and to preface it with what she thought of as prenatal influences.

Her father, an extremely radical doctor, who had wandered the world in search of health and taken her with him, on his journey towards death — even as the Egyptian king who ' journeyed always, in the prison of the sun, in search of his tomb, and once there . . . arranged the time according to his pleasure ' — which he found on a sunny afternoon in the wind-clean, infinitely lonely little Piazza of Torcello, whence he returned to Venice in a gondola, past the white-walled Island of the Dead like a

peaceful Venetian, with a golden sail and two gondoliers, had told her many speculative things out of his pain-racked, but acutely aware, dying brain.

His scientific researches had been concerning the mysteries of pain and birth . . . and the remote factors affecting them, even as a distant passing star causes chemical solar change, bringing an Earth, a Neptune, a Saturn, in its wake . . . accident . . . result of an nth vibration — Change! He had died convinced that cancer, from which he suffered, was perhaps only insane tissue, and insanity merely some 'provincial' matter performing some inevitable chemistry out beyond the paucity of the known fragment of Flammarion's spectrum of the vibration rate of all matter. . . . He had talked, with the almost mad clarity of mortal illness, and Lucinda had listened. . . . And now, working in the plastic living stuff of young souls, she instinctively tried to put into use her father's attitude towards influences. . . .

This particular room might have awed another child. Not Pyotr. He sat looking at everything, his large, curious eyes devouring objects, shapes, colours that somehow he had been hungry for. The huge Persian blue vase filled with sweet peas (Lucinda had bought them that morning for this very interview), the Chinese shrine of black lacquer, with open doors, an unearthly tarnished red inside, to extol the gilded god who reposed there, the Hobusai of a man rowing a fabulous boat in a decorative Sea, the blue-green bronze Diana who was taking flight from the top of a Chinese Chippendale cabinet, as red as an African geranium . . . all these things

and many others in the first elegant room Pyotr had ever been in, made his eyes comfortable, made him hear that spectral hurdy-gurdy he was going to make some day.

His eyes strayed back to Lucinda in her high Florentine chair, waiting, as she knew how to wait, in black velvet and green ear-rings, and she saw what she had hoped to see; for Pyotr had flowered to her careful beguiling, and his eyes were as clear of shyness as a faun awakened in a thicket by the West wind . . . too far away for startling.

He went over to the open grand piano and struck one note on it.

E flat.

"Oh! It's music that you want!" said Lucinda.

"*Da,*" said Pyotr, still listening to the sonorous overtone as it died away, antiphoned by some fragile thing in the Chippendale cabinet. He had never touched a piano before, although he often loitered to gaze at them in shop-windows, wondering if your fingers walked on those white keys like you walked on the flags of a narrow street, with black doors for you to knock and find. . . ?

Pyotr had already found much of what lay inside of those doors for him, in this very room, whose charm was compounded of some twenty civilizations.

"Then you shall have it," decided Lucinda, who was not given to hesitation in important matters. For what use was it to ask Pyotr if he would like to be a carpenter, or a cabinet-maker, or to learn book-keeping, or printing?

And so his education began, with a lesson, within the hour, for the music teacher who gave some of

her afternoons to the Settlement saw great promise in the thin dark lad who touched the piano keys so softly, waiting to hear the overtone each time, and assured him that the white keyboard *was* a street that could lead you anywhere you wanted to go.

And when the lesson was over, Pyotr looked longingly at the 'cello that leaned like an aloof but friendly wanton in the corner of the room. For he wanted to know about that, too.

"You want to play the 'cello, too?" asked the teacher, gaily.

"A little one," Pyotr said.

"Well, some day, when you know a little more about music, I'll show you a violin, and if you'd rather play that — we'll see!" she promised.

And the neophyte walked homeward endeavouring to remember the diatonic scale by whistling it, but wishing, somehow, it was different. It seemed to lack something. . . .

And that evening Lucinda came to the shop to bring Pyotr an exercise book, with scales to copy, on her way to the Elevated, and the other boys, who had reflected all day concerning their fortunes, had changed the outline of them somewhat, as was only human, after twenty-four hours, although Alexey still wished to be a merchant, and sell things that he had imported. Sergey by now thought that, after all, ferry-boat captains only went to two ports, and thought that an ocean liner would be the thing, and would it take long to learn, for he was now sixteen, and pretty strong?

Gavril, who was a year younger, wanted to do something you could ride a horse to do, like the

waterfront traffic officer he had seen that afternoon. A general, maybe. . . .

Lucinda smiled inwardly at the effect of her leaven. Sergey, far from wishing any longer to rescue drowning persons in large numbers, visioned the more opulent gold braid of transatlantic authority, and Gavril had entirely forgotten his humane desire of yesterday to feed all the hungry cats. . . .

Nicolai, however, had stuck to his guns, like Alexey. He wanted to draw, and be an architect or something. Nicolai was modest.

But being a true *belle dame* of *merci,* she saw to it that each one was fitted into the intricate fabric of future citizenship that the Settlement was weaving, according to his desire.

And so, in royal return for the red slippers, in which she had danced all night at a party — as if return should ever be made for a gift made for pleasure and given in freedom — she came to them all as Lady Bountiful, and the Settlement House became to all of the five sons of Ivan the Cobbler a Palace of Opportunity.

And there Alexey learned some of the theoretical crafts of Business, and Sergey and Gavril a mysterious science called Salesmanship, as well as arithmetic and spelling. Nicolai learned to draw a wooden pyramid, and a cube, a bowl, and birds and fishes and tables. And the drawings he brought home fired Pyotr, too, to want to draw, for he and Nicolai were more nearly friends than any of the others. Nicolai seldom had anything to say, and Pyotr understood that.

And so Pyotr copied Nicolai's drawings, as fast

as he made them, until he had the courage to begin to make some for himself, whatever he saw anywhere, the stove, and the icon of St. George, the copper kettle, and all the objects in the shop.

Then one day, in the middle of his exercise book, he began to draw a hurdy-gurdy, out of whole cloth, only somehow he couldn't remember just how one looked, and so put in a smoke-stack like the peanut wagon that had a whistle, and gave it scrolls like a violin for handles, and a row of pine trees like piles of circumflexes strung on a string. And then it seemed better to have it a ship after all, and since he could not draw wheels very well, he gave it waves like the Hokusai in the Settlement House, and fishes swimming, and a sail and trumpets mounted on sleigh runners instead of cannon, and felt very happy about it.

So did Lucinda, who saw it one day, and it was arranged that Pyotr was to have lessons in drawing, and to splash water-colour as he pleased, at an afternoon class. For Play Schools had not then been invented, although Lucinda was groping towards the idea of complete unconscious expression among her many adopted children.

And so competition sprang up between Nicolai and Pyotr, but not rivalry, for they went different roads; Nicolai content to draw what was before him, but his brother, fascinated that his pencil seemed to know what he wanted to do, if he held it lightly and thought of something else, drew queer things like elephants with houses on their backs, and swans whose wings became clouds with doors and windows in them.

And one day he tried to draw a woman, which, when he showed her to Lucinda in her office, she gasped, and laughed gaily, and hugged him.

And the music teacher found a violin for him to practice on, and taught him many things about it, how to tune it, and what happened when you drew the bow across two strings at once. And scales.

But Pyotr, practicing those scales in the back room of the shop, always seemed to want them to make little steps (as he thought of them), instead of the measured ones he had been taught, which seemed rather like inches to him.

Lucinda did more than these things for the house of Mestravvik. She had many friends East of the Park and North of Fifty-ninth Street, and as time went by she brought them or sent them to Ivan the cobbler for slippers of gold or silver, of red leather and green chamois skin, for never had such slippers gladdened the heart of woman.

An Ivan's fame spread, and eddied about the various quarters of Thespis, where shoes not only have to please the exacting taste of the leading lady, but all of the feminine critics in the audience as well. His skill was heard of even in the opera, and penetrated the houses of the rich, and the powerful, and merely charming.

Ladies began to come — in taxicabs and in limousines — to ask him to make slippers for them; and Alexey, growing fast and seeing how things are in this world of commerce, by much persuasion caused Ivan to take an apprentice and then two, to enable him to keep up with his orders.

" For ladies do not like to wait very long for any-

thing," said Alexey, out of his wide observation of life at twenty-one.

And he talked continually of starting a shop in Grand Street, for the finest of handmade slippers. . . . The Cinderella Shop, it was to be.

And for a spell the cellar rang with three hammers, and Ivan taught the apprentices how to dip a shoe, made inside out, in hot water, and to pull it right with tongs, the old brass tongs (his grandfather's) from his father's fireplace in Moscow. For that was how you did it.

And for these workmen, once they had caught some of Ivan's wizardry, Alexey hired the first floor; for the cellar Ivan wanted for his own. His stubby hammer lost something of its magic play when onlookers were present — except children . . . or Pyotr . . . or a princess.

And Alexey took an upper floor of Mrs. Petroff's house for them all to live in, with plush furniture and a phonograph, "out of the boot." They now kept only the bank-book in the boot, for Alexey had been inexorable, having learned that money was money, and banks were made to put it in. The Settlement had taught him that. Ivan continued to put money in it, however, secretly.

Since Pyotr could not add money together, seemed not the kind who could sell shoes — well, why should he not be a musician? Violinists got money, they argued among themselves. And Pyotr said nothing, but his eyes danced.

So began the Americanization of the Mestravviks.

Chapter VII

TWO MUSICIANS TO CLOSED DOORS. . . . CARROUSELS . . . AND ESTATES IN THRACE . . .

CHAPTER VII

One day Nicolai brought home a violin for Pyotr, that he had found in a pawnshop. It had had the look of a good one to Nicolai, simply as a design.

But perhaps he had bought it for the curious little carved woman's head on the scroll, half-gay, half-sad, wearing a hat a little on one side like a Tanagra figurine, and looking down along the four strings with her quizzical eyes, so that the player was bound to look at her.

It was very small for a violin. Pyotr was still undersized, too, Nicolai had thought, smiling to himself, while he bargained with the pawnbroker. For Nicolai had a new job, thanks to his training at the Settlement. He made patterns for furniture, for a manufacturer in Houston Street . . . sideboards, and Morris chairs, and all the other pieces required by dwellers in apartments to maintain a crowded dignity in their lives. . . .

Pyotr was too overcome to do more than stammer: "*Spassibo* . . . *spassibo*—thanks! Nicolai!" and place the treasure under his chin immediately, to try it. The small instrument, which was a Seventeenth Century *cantone,* cast up by one of the ten thousand laws of Chance that bring to pawnshops their occasional apple of gold amid tinsel, had a tone

like distant silver carillon bells ringing across the old sea-floor that is Flanders. It seemed like a woman to Pyotr's awakening consciousness. Its far-away voices, like echoes, were like his mother crooning an old Roumanian lullaby to him . . . the only memory of Radiana that he had. It had a fragrance such as only an old violin can have, a fragrance of resin, of mellow wood, of fine old varnish.

It smelled of music.

It was like an early Greek torso, all that was left of some buried Psyche, patinated by earth not too brutal, but mellow, sufficing, enriching.

And Pyotr's teacher at the Settlement agreed to find a violin teacher for him elsewhere, at Alexey's request, and abandon piano lessons except for the purposes of composition. And so he was sent one morning to see Mikael Mutke, a great violinist, very independent, even though poor. A man who had the courage to play Goosens and Bartók and others of "The Six" to even a handful of people; and at grave deficit to himself, his belief in the music of the New Age being profound.

"Dead composers will rest none the worse if living ones are played," he was apt to say.

A man of singularly warm heart towards students, a Roumanian by birth, who had, at seventeen, walked from Bukharest to Paris, with a fellow student, fiddling in the streets and at crossroads en route for support, to seek admission to the Conservatoire.

A tall, magnificently strong-looking man opened the door, on the top floor of an old house in the East Forties.

The fine Roman head, set on his powerful body like a gladiator's, inclined graciously towards Pyotr, who stood, trembling a little, on the threshold, his beloved *cantone* under his arm. A large, sensitive hand grasped his.

"Come in, come in, my child," said he, in a rich and utterly sympathetic voice. "You wish, do you not, to take some lessons? You shall!"

"*Pojalvista* . . . ! If you please!" stammered Pyotr, startled into Russian by his reception, for the Settlement teacher had told him: "Just go and see Mr. Mutke, Pyotr. If he likes you, he will give you lessons. He says he cannot teach anyone he does not like."

And here he was in a great bare room with a grand piano and a few chairs, and two 'cellos flanking the old black and gold marble mantel like decorous guests.

And Mutke, turning the *cantone* over and over, was telling Pyotr who had made it (for here was a true archæologist of music), and how the Stage Manager of Fêtes for Louis XIV had carved many *cantones* himself, and always with the half-sad, half-gay head of a coryphée in the *Corps de Danse* at Versailles — the woman he loved.

"And he carved this one for you," he added, smiling.

And having put Pyotr at ease, he bade him play anything he liked, and while he did so, the master paced the room, not looking at him.

Suddenly he stopped.

"What was that?" he asked, almost sharply. But it was the sharpness of keen interest.

For Pyotr, having played some Chopin, and a little Schumann, had with growing confidence, drifted into things of his own, half dreamed as yet.

"It is my *Cadenza* of Brooklyn Bridge," said Pyotr, simply.

"Play it again, please," said Mutke, this time leaning on his piano, intent, animated, giving Pyotr the attention of his ears and not his eyes.

And Pyotr, more boldly, did the wind singing, singing in the steel cobwebs of the bridge, as he had heard it there, slow and wailing, and somehow, questioning, but revealing.

"Wind in the rigging of cosmic ships!" muttered Mutke, at the end. "My dear young friend, we must find every assistance for you. All that *I* can do is already yours. You are a composer, and not an interpreter. It is your privilege to gather some of the messages that come to us through the tuning of our mechanistic apparatus. . . . Who knows? It may be that through them we are receiving the communications of distant stars! Listen to them all, my friend, and listen more truly to the sounds that you cannot hear. . . ."

He spoke as if to himself.

And Pyotr nodded.

"For the rest, work, work, work," the master went on, more briskly. "We cannot depend on inspiration alone, nor can we rest upon the first audition of hidden music. It is our task to render it intelligible to those others who are not so fortunate as to come with us on our swift pendulum-voyage through space, where the vibrant solitude has no gasoline in it, and the trembling silences have no corrupt greed

in them. . . . But they would *like* to hear what *we* hear," he added, with an absent look. "Your little *cantone* there is a ship in the sky for you! I will teach you the ropes of her as well as I can. It is for you to steer, to guard her well from the jagged, pig-iron rocks of the Charybdis and Scylla of today . . . it is for you to remember always that Orpheus played to wild beasts . . . and with a primitive scale of strings, even in an allegory. You have *every* scale there in your strings. Never forget to be primitive. Brooklyn Bridge sings of people going home from work. It throbs responsively to the oread whistles of the ships below, setting out on lonely journeys. Funerals cross it, within its gamut of rhythm. Lovers in taxicabs and trolley cars rush to meet each other across it. Let us not forget that our steam cranes, and snow-shovels, and airplanes and motor cars, and radios all spring from two necessities: Food . . . and Love. Nor that they are only the earth-symbols of something bigger that we dimly perceive . . . let us call it God, anyway. . . . And despite the distortion of these lonely Frankensteinian monsters of steel and copper and rubber and stone and blind force that we have made, the need for those two things is in the very sinews of them all. . . . It is not an easy road that the gods have chosen for you!

"Come back tomorrow at eleven, my child. Goodbye."

And the large sensitive hand gripped Pyotr's with encouragement, promise, understanding.

Pyotr went down the stairs feeling as if he had wings. Most of Mutke's words he had not compre-

hended at all, but the spirit of that first interview was to linger with him, and be echoed back out of his own consciousness into music.

For Mikael Mutke had saluted him as, somehow, an equal. . . .

And Pyotr, who wandered much in East Side streets late in the afternoon, when all sounds are more evocative, caught up the rhythm of a steam-winch on the deck of a freighter, as he idled along the waterfronts; the cacophony of hoarse iron shovels taking up snow in winter; the whir of the scissors-grinder's emery-stone on street corners. . . .

And his days passed in a continuous pleasant fever, for he readily assimilated the primary language of piano and violin, of counterpoint, musical dictation and the seeds of composition. And when he was not at work, or practising in the back room of the apartment upstairs, while Ivan listened, he was listening everywhere for the sounds of which New York is prodigal, and learning to pick up rhythms out of the chaos: the chugging of a steam roller on asphalt, the heavy rumble of the big flat wheels like thunder; the shrill and tuneful melody of a peanut-wagon's whistle, which he associated with some strange music heard in Chinatown — the shrill flute, the three-stringed fiddle, the flat sound of a wooden drum; and he haunted the church there for the smell of incense, and the chants that were sung. And sometimes he ventured over to the West Side, to Washington Street. Pyotr half-fearfully one day ventured into the little Syrian church there, and heard Greek masses played on the miniature organ — once by the miniature priest. And once Ivan took

him to the splendid Russian church uptown, where he heard a long mass sung without pause, the splendid overtone of the Greek church.

He learned the cadences of the music of the little carrousel on a wagon in the Italian streets, and paused to catch the beat of drills, digging up pavements, and stored them all away in his busy little brain. He saw children dancing like autumn leaves in the street to a blind fiddler's tune, and in him the desire was born to write a Dance of Life of New York . . . a Rhapsody. . . . And in it somewhere was to be a gay and whimsical tune for some little girl to dance to, with golden oranges to roll on the floor. As a Ballet of Laughter, Pyotr thought of it. . . .

She would have golden hair, of course.

Chapter VIII

IF YOU ROB THE ONE YOU LOVE, YOU ROB YOURSELF

CHAPTER VIII

And many years passed for the Mestravviks, crowded years of toil by day and school by night.

And one spring day after much search Alexey found a modest little shop in Grand Street, and painted the front of it blue, and hung a new and resplendent sign over it.

THE
CINDERELLA
SANDAL SHOP
IVAN MESTRAVVIK &
SONS
FINE SHOON

He had learned that word out of a book in the Settlement House. For Alexey had taken to reading poetry secretly, being in love once more with Marya. . . .

And one day Alexey and Sergey sent invitations to all their friends of the Settlement House and their clientele uptown and a few people elsewhere. They opened the Sandal Shop at four in the afternoon with a choice pair of Ivan's slippers in each window — one of pale green leather with black

trimmings; the other of red with gold heels. The samovar provided tea for everyone, and Alexey gave to each lady a yellow jonquil.

And Lucinda came to the opening of the shop, and brought a friend in a limousine, a sad, red-haired lady, with lovely hands and feet, who clapped her hands and smiled a marvellous smile, and exclaimed, "*Dio mio*, I have looked all my life for a slipper-maker, only to find him in Grand Street! "

Whereupon Alexey, scenting business from the appearance of the black and maroon car outside, invited her to write her orders; for " my father can mek anything," he proclaimed, nobly, but without misgiving, for had not his father made shoes all his life, without measurement, and these fine ones in the windows?

It ended with Lucinda taking the great lady around to Orchard Street to see Ivan, then and there, for he had not been prevailed upon to come to the opening, despite all pleading. "*Niet, niet,*" he had said, quietly, many times. " I stay here."

And there the red-haired lady told Ivan just how many pairs of slippers she needed all the time, and for what purposes.

" Two for the street, and two for evening, and two for the theatre, and two for pleasure, Maestro! " she exclaimed, and since Ivan could not count so many, she took wooden pegs out of the box on his workbench and laid them in twoes across his knee. For she was a very great lady indeed.

Even Ivan could see that.

The perfume she brought into the dusky shop was like violets in the spring. And she made appro-

priate gestures with two of her pointed fingers to show him that "these two danced" and these two rested on cushions, and these two walked and paused, and walked backwards; and one stamped on the floor for the play. But for the two for pleasure she wriggled her fingers in the air as a child kicks her heels, until Lucinda's mirth brought tears to Lucinda, and Ivan's laughter made him rock back and forth.

For Ivan could not laugh very often.

For the great lady was very much of a child, and knew the most expressive pantomimes, and knew singularly well how to beguile anyone she chose, being for the most part Irish, and therefore skilful at the game.

For she was Madame Nischka of the opera and the stage, who had gone at the age of nineteen from a Dublin ball straight to London, and between dances as it were, at the magical behest of a Russian who was returning there at midnight, and who had, in the space of a Dublin evening come to the Great Conclusion about her.

For people either reached a Great Conclusion about Nischka, or none. It had always been so.

And so she had married the Prince — for so he was — on board the little Irish Channel steamer, and startled the *Morning Post's* readers, she being the toast of certain Irish streets in London, as well as the more vulnerable of Dublin; for Nischka carried on, by family as well as in person, the traditions of the Eighteenth Century, when, indeed, some commentators think, Ireland conquered England, or at least London, which if not England, is, incontro-

vertibly, the memorable living tomb of much of the fine spirit of a fine epoch.

And as a famous Beau once said: "Faith, if Erin did not lend us a charming woman now and then, we should died of the vapors, Madam!"

Which may have been said to Nischka's own great-grandmother.

Her prince had gambled her away, it may be. He had at any rate gambled away all his fortune, and himself perished of depression, and a bullet, on the cliff at Monte Carlo, and she barely twenty-two. But he left her at least a pittance, an estate near Moscow, a wide Slavic acquaintance, and a diminutive name, "Nischka," from Eileenisahka, and the whole world, if not at her feet, inclined to be sooner or later.

And since she came of a long line of the people of the theatre, it was inevitable that her conquest should be of the tens of thousands rather than the simple many who besought her to marry them.

And Nischka needed many new slippers, four times a year at least, and left a standing order of eight pairs at a time with Ivan, and said pleasant things in Russian to him, that brought a flush to his withered cheek. For Nischka knew very well an artist when she found one. She also knew in the corners of her sad eyes that her patronage would doubtless make Ivan famous, and perhaps ruin the artist in him. But Nischka was a woman, and vain of her feet and so started the Juggernaut of Success with less qualm. . . .

She remembered, however, a humble hair-dresser

in the Rue Petite Chaumière whom she had ruined . . . via the Rue de Rivoli.

He had lost his wife on that account, and his simplicity.

Nischka knew, as few do, that the silver cup of material success is anointed outside with a certain hemlock salve for all who touch it, and inside with a deadly nightshade, for the drinker thereof . . . not, alas as the wooden salad bowl is rubbed pleasantly with garlic, but with a lingering poison, that does not kill, but atrophies . . . a death in life for the artist.

Hence had she always contrived to remain poor. It was not difficult, since she had the Irish gift of extravagance.

"No, *ma chère,*" she could say to the young girl with a promising voice, who came to her for advice, "sing, live, love, all you can, be paid for the singing, but for neither of the others. But when you are paid, keep that look of greed out of your eyes and . . . out of your heart . . . it will creep into your voice and make it cold . . . it will creep into your veins and kill your good red corpuscles; it will creep into your curves and make them look like upholstery . . . it will creep into your love, and drive away the man you love, and rob him.

"And if you rob the man you love, you rob yourself!"

Such was Nischka's Pagan wisdom.

"A woman is a *viola d'amore,* made to be played upon, made to give forth out of her mellow depths the answer to Orpheus. Would you drop gold pieces

through the sound-vents of a viol even as Tontinus — such being her Marinism of the practical Tonti — and his friends deposited them in their bronze sphere as insurance against death? "

"You will have many a wolf there if you do, my dear . . . and not the blessed wolf of gay poverty. . . . There is no insurance against death of the spirit, my child."

But Nischka reckoned upon old Ivan knowing these things, from the simple depth in his Muscovite eyes.

And he, having listened, counted off those eight pairs of slippers, on his fingers; two for the street; one black, with steel buckles; one grey, with strap — two for evening; one silver, with blue butterfly, one gold, with small flower, an' black heel, very high — two for teater?

Here Ivan questioned, and Nischka answered: "One black satin, very high heel, very simple; the other pale blue velvet, with strap . . . and red heels! "

Ivan nodded, and went on. "Two wit' pleasure. One red . . . like copper! " He glanced at her hair. "Wit' brass buckle, and one —? "

"*I* shall be very jealous," Lucinda interrupted, gaily. "He made *me* some red shoes once! That is why we are here. — No, it isn't," she hurried on quickly to say — "We came to see two great artists! Is Pyotr here, Maestro? Oh, there you are, *liebchen!* " For Pyotr had appeared, a slim apparition, in the door from the back room. And Lucinda went warmly to greet him.

Ivan looked down at the floor, at the homage of

her speech, and a pomegranate flush took his pale parchment face by surprise.

"—— and one?" he asked Nischka, hesitatingly. That last pair of slippers was to be the choicest of all.

But Nischka did not immediately answer, for she was staring at Pyotr. And he stared at her a long time, and wondered who she might be. For her green eyes went quietly, intently, from one thing to another in the shop, and back to him. Pyotr felt very strange, and drew nearer a step, unconsciously. For Nischka seemed to be about to say something to him.

But she spoke to Ivan, in answer to his query, still examining Pyotr with a frank curiosity, a totally unembarrassing scrutiny, which was Nischka's way with everything and everybody in the world that intrigued her.

"Mules, Maestro," she was saying to Ivan. "You know mules? Little shu' to carry women at home? Cerise — cherry *couleur* — inside. Satin. No backs. Outside, lavender velvet — *very* wicked!" she added, demurely.

"*Da, da!*" agreed Ivan. "All right? These eight shu'?"

"But surely!" said Nischka, delightedly, and she took off her violets and pressed them into his hands. "*Grazie, Signore! — Spassibo! Spassibo!*"

"*Nicheve . . .*" said Ivan, deprecatingly.

"Nischka," said Lucinda, "this is my godchild, Pyotr. He is a composer. Some day we shall have a Symphony from him, shall we not, *liebchen?*"

And Nischka said a strange thing, with a touch of

shyness in it, as if she had climbed up to the array of sticks and grass and thrums of silk in the apple-tree and seen that the robin's eggs *were* blue, after all.

"You have written it already!" said she. And she did not shake hands with him at all.

Pyotr flushed. How did she know about the big hurdy-gurdy he had drawn once? She had looked into his eyes just now and seen the Rhapsody score that was in the back room — much scrawled music-paper, with thumb-nail sketches scattered among the scratchy notes . . . birds, and clouds, and things. For that was the way Pyotr wrote music — which he had been working at. He did not know what to call it, but Nischka's second sight he quite understood. He knew things like that himself, sometimes, about Marya, and Ivan, and Mutke . . . the people he liked.

He liked Nischka. But he could not answer her.

She smiled divinely at him. "Bring it to me in Paris one day," she said. "I will get it given for you by the *Societé Moderne*."

"Yes," said Pyotr.

"Money, Maestro?" asked Nischka, of Ivan. She took a twenty dollar gold-piece from her bag. For Nischka liked to pay in gold, when she paid at all. "I shall come and get the slippers — next week, maybe? — and bring you some more."

"*Niet, niet,*" said the old man. "We hav' money here, in toe bood!" He waved his hand towards the boot on the wall.

"Then it shall go in the 'bood,'" said Nischka, and went over and gravely dropped it there. It

clinked on some lesser pieces there, in the toe that had urged the ribs of lean Tartar ponies across the plains of Mongolia, as various coins had clinked there for nearly a century. . . .

And Ivan's fortune was made, had he known it. For Fame had come to his very door.

Perhaps Lucinda guessed, for she looked away.

" God forgive me! " muttered Nischka, as they went up the stairs.

She had kissed the tip of her gloved finger to Pyotr, and said one word to him: " Paris."

I hope he won't have to, said Lucinda, soberly. " But I had to bring you to see those two."

" Thank you, my dear," said Nischka. " That artist-child in the corner . . . eyes like big black plums. . . . Lots of Tomorrow's music in them! "

" *Touche* for the Settlement House! " Lucinda commented, gaily.

And Nischka's eyes shone, and were no longer sad.

" Two artists in one cellar! " said she, reverently.

Chapter IX

HOW IT IS TO BE AN OCTAVE TALLER

CHAPTER IX

And one morning Ivan happily able to be engaged all the time, now upon the slippers he loved, though he never refused to make repairs for the poor, or for a child. When they wished to pay, he waved his hand at the boot on the wall. And what they dropped into it no one ever knew.

For Ivan knew what it was to be poor, and remembered the Box for the Unfortunate in the old Muscovite Churches, into which went buttons as well as kopecks, nails, bits of metal, and leather. For the Church understood, and dealt with them all.

'Pay what you like,' he would say gaily. Many curious things came out of the boot from time to time, as might be expected, and among them, a brass baggage-check of the Lackawanna Railroad, a leaden image of St. Anne de Beaupré, a fireman's brass button, and a silver two-shilling piece of New South Wales; for Russia, transplanted in New York, has still that pan-metalurgical racial felicity that has made Russian bells more resonant and more human than any other.

The baggage check became, by Ivan's deft *repoussé,* a new helmet for Genghishka, who had lost his in a battle; St. Anne de Beaupré was turned over to Toralinda to pray to for the healing of her

broken heart; and New South Wales lost a unit of coinage to make a flat silver ring which Ivan fabricated as a little gift for Madam Nischka, to be given to her some day.

And in the ring he set, with some skill, a square of Russian lapis lazuli, which he remembered that his father had secreted in the boot.

It was to represent the scrap of sky above Little Dog Square, in Moscow, where he had been born, and to bring the family luck after he was dead.

For Ivan remembered the ballet dancer who had given him such a ring when he was a child. And now Nischka, having brought them fortune, had become in his simple old mind that other Woman of the Theatre, and must needs have her ring given back to her in poetic justice. For Nischka's eyes were as blue as the sky to Ivan, though green to other people.

He sat surrounded by rows of beautiful leather; like flowers in a garden in the scant Russian summers, he thought; like colors on a palette, for the boys searched far and wide for new materials for shoes.

And something in Ivan's soul sang with pleasure over their magpie findings.

He loved colors. The golden dome of the Kremlin lingered in his mind; the colors of crowds on Feast and Market Days in the Square before the Kremlin or, when he had been taken to walk in the old park on holidays, the spot where Catherine the Great had once set a sentry to guard the first violet of spring and then forgot him for a whole week-end.

And he fell to dreaming, as he cut some golden leather sides out of the Kremlin, whose domes he saw reflected in his newly cleaned window above, and some red flowers to go on the toes . . . out of the sunset behind the Kremlin.

It was only the bright copper kettles and pans that always hung at the back of the shop, and the sunset was the red candlelight, shining before the icon of St. George there. But Ivan was back in Moscow, and wherever a Russian is, he takes Russia with him. Who has not heard of the General of the old régime, working all day at a New York shop opening doors, only to go home to dinner, and put on his uniform and dine in state as himself, a Russian General? Ivan could hear Pyotr practising on his violin in the back room, very softly, with a mute, and Ivan thought: 'Many year ago, my father sat in his shop, and I in back room thrumming a little *balalaika*. Now it is different. Maybe . . . Pyotr will not mek' shu' all his life; maybe . . . he will be artist. . . .'

He was not surprised to hear light feet above him. They were coming down his steps. . . . They were here. He looked shyly at the floor. He knew them.

"You're still here! How nice!" said Lucinda, for it was she. And she smiled at him. She had a package in yellow tissue paper in her hands. "I have not seen you in ever so long. I have been married, you see! I have a little girl."

To which Ivan gave her a look of simple pleasure, for her face was radiant.

"You see, my friend," said she, shaking hands

with him, " here is a young lady who needs some new shoes to dance in at a party. It is her birthday! "

And Ivan unrolled the swathings of a beautiful Russian doll with flaxen braids and a red apron, with a black pocket in it. But her silk-stockinged feet had no shoes on them, just as the Princess said.

" May I watch you? " she asked, and sat down on the bench beside him. Ivan had reached for some leather.

" Red, these shu'? " he inquired.

" Yes, red, like some you made for me, a long time ago," she said. " I never forgot, you see! How are all the boys? And how is Pyotr? How are all the dolls? "

" T'e toll are very well," said Ivan slowly, as he cut some vermilion leather. " T'e boys are well also. — Wit' heels? "

She nodded.

" Buckle? "

" *Everything!* " said the Princess, " Oh, how nice to be here again! "

And so the doll was measured for slippers and fitted, Ivan using his thumb for a last, while Lucinda, like a bird who has come back to an enchanted place, darted to and from with her quick and merry grey eyes, throwing a kiss at the icon, chattering.

" You know," said she, " Maestro, I have been married four years. And my little girl is named 'Cindy!

" For Cinderelle, you see! "

" So? " said Ivan. " Is he a good man, your husban'? "

" Oh, yes," said Lucinda. " You will like him. He

never comes home without a present in his big pocket for 'Cindy. And sometimes even a present for this young lady. 'Cindy looks for them in all his little pockets. ' Is it for me? ' she says. All packages are for 'Cindy! She can talk, Maestro; think of that! She's three years old."

"*Da,*" said Ivan in the broad and comprehending tone of the old Russian who loves all the things of life. "You are happy."

The Princess made little sounds, singularly like a bird on whose head the sun had unexpectedly fallen while asleep. And she sat humming a little tune to herself. Suddenly she stopped.

"Is that the little one?" said she. "Playing the violin? Is that Pyotr?"

Ivan nodded and took a penny whistle from his pocket and blew upon it.

"Pyotr," he called.

And Pyotr came running in, disheveled, a red silk handkerchief tucked into his collar, bringing his violin, bow and a sheet of music. At sight of the lady a deep flush came over his startled face and he stopped, and made a queer little bow to her. And the Princess jumped up and ran to him and kissed him, which pleased Pyotr.

"How tall you've grown," said she, in mock terror, measuring his head down from her shoulder with outstretched fingers. "A whole octave. It used to be *two,* remember? And you play Schumann now?"

"Yes," said Pyotr, "the *Arabesque.*"

"That is wonderful," said the Princess. "See, this is my granddaughter who has come to see you. Her

name is Anushka. She has come all the way from Russia to get some shoes to dance in."

And she took the doll and extended her pale pink hand to Pyotr, who shook it gravely.

"She is going to a very grand party . . . tomorrow afternoon," the Princess elaborated, "to dance until sunset. Her mother and I are going too."

Ivan, who still had the penny whistle between his lips, made three little sounds with it, and Pyotr beamed. And between him and his father passed the same look of comprehension that Lucinda had noticed years before. He went over to the shelf under the icon and laid down his violin and bow very tenderly, and spread his red silk handkerchief over them.

"Can I mek'?" said he, and took up the tiny scraps of leather Ivan had so deftly fashioned, found a needle and thread and began to sew with all his might on the red leather shoes of Anushka, the little Muscovite, while the Princess and the Patriarch waited in silence. The shoes were soon finished and tried on, whereupon the Princess took Anushka and assisted her to make a very stiff-stomached bow in the manner of a doll, whereupon she extracted from Anushka's apron pocket a tiny scrap of paper which she gave to Pyotr. Unfolded, it seemed to be a paper streamer with little marks on it.

"It says," explained Lucinda, "that the Princess Anushka brings an invitation to all the other *émigrés* of Moscow to come to her party tomorrow afternoon. Genghishka and Toralinda and the others. And to bring with them their uncle whose name, if I mistake not, is Pyotr the Great. Will you

come? I will come and get you and bring you home. Outside there is a magical blue ship on four wheels, and if you will look through the window, you will see Anushka's mother flattening her nose. Parties do that to mothers, too, you know! " And Lucinda gravely flattened her own patrician nose with her long fingers.

And Pyotr looked. There just beyond the narrow sidewalk was the window of a pale blue car, and in the window was a little waxen face, pink like an early apple. Two large and searching blue eyes gazed back at him. and a little hand not much bigger than Anushka's petulantly thrust away the tangled dish-mop of yellow hair from her temples. And the two children gazed at each other a long time.

Such was the first meeting of Pyotr and Cindarelle.

" We will come at four," said Lucinda. " Will all of you be ready then? And will you bring your violin? " she added softly. " For it is Cindarelle's birthday."

" Her nose *is* flat," said Pyotr, irrelevantly, wonderingly.

" That will be mended in time," said Lucinda. " It has to be pinched now and then, you see. "

" Does she dance? " asked Pyotr.

" Yes, yes," the Princess assured him, " all day until sunset! Will you play for her to dance, tomorrow? "

And Pyotr remembered a little girl whom he had seen dancing in the street like an autumn leaf in a whorl of fragrant wind, and remembered the tune of the hurdy-gurdy, and so nodded in his shy fashion.

"Very well, then," said the Princess. "Will you come, too, Maestro? And bring your whistle?" she added, softly.

"*Da,*" said the old man. "Yes. I will come."

For Ivan had not been to a party since his wedding, a long time ago, now.

Chapter X

THE PARTY OF ANUSHKA THE MUSCOVITE

CHAPTER X

And at four the next afternoon the blue ship on wheels stood again at the door of Ivan the Shoemaker, and a deferential negro chauffeur entered, cap in hand, and showed all his white teeth in a smile. "Miss Lucindy say you come to her house," he said to Ivan, who had been uncomfortably waiting for some time dressed in an old frock coat out of the chest upstairs.

His collar hurt him, since he seldom wore any at work, but his eyes were shining with excitement. Pyotr entered almost immediately, having dashed out to get some Russian sugar cakes for the party.

The dolls, energetically brushed, their shoes polished, their faces washed, and their strings untangled that morning, lay nervously in the carved chest, still open, lest anything else had to go in, on the work-bench.

No work had been done all day by either Ivan or Pyotr. Part of Ivan's embarrassment lay in the fear that Alexey should come in accidentally, as he often had lately, to see how things were going. New rings had had to be tied on all the puppets' strings — brass rings, one for the middle finger; one for the thumb; one for the little finger. This had taken much time, and Genghishka's helmet had needed a

little mending, and Petrouchka's lute had lacked its third string of silk. Pyotr beamed at the negro, and hurried into the back room to bring his violin. The door locked, they both glanced swiftly up and down the street, and climbed into the blue ship, with the laughter of conspirators.

The door closed solidly. Smooth wheels took them out of Orchard Street, with an escort of fifteen children, climbing to the running board and the spare tire.

Ivan had never been in a car before.

He had been in a carriage once, though, in Moscow, a carriage with bright yellow cushions and a bearskin robe. These cushions were pale blue, and the robe purple that the negro tucked about their feet. He sat tense with the carved box on his knees, Pyotr with his violin case.

"You bring whistle?" asked Pyotr, in a far-away voice.

"*Da,*" said Ivan.

Through tangled, crowded East Side streets, along under the roaring Elevated, up First Avenue, they went; across Fifty-ninth, and up Fifth Avenue, the two aliens gazing dreamily out upon the frozen park. They whisked into a side street and drew up before a modest but charming yellow stucco house with a battered saint in a niche between its first floor windows, with rusty wrought iron grilles and a dark peacock blue door. A door sprang open like the door of a cuckoo clock to receive them. A man in a rusty coloured tweed suit, a tall, smiling man with a black beard, was holding out his hand.

"Awfully glad to see you, Maestro," he was say-

ing, " and you, little Maestro. Let me take your violin." Ivan clung to his chest, however, until they were safely inside, in a paneled hall that smelled like fine leather, when their coats were laid on an old *cassone*. The Architect of the House, who was Lucinda's husband, led them past a flowering tree in a Chinese jar of white porcelain, and into a low rich dining-room, where stood on a worn rosewood board decanters and bottles.

" Vodka for you, Maestro? " he asked. And Ivan's eyes shone as he said, " *Da.*" " And a little wine for the little Maestro? " the host inquired of Ivan.

" *Da,*" said the old man, " not too much."

And the mellow sherry glowed in Pyotr's throat, after the Architect had clinked glasses with them. It glowed in his throat all the way up the wide, steep stairs, that creaked with such pleasant sounds like the echoes of a violin from some stir of air.

Ivan's throat glowed too, for the brisk vodka made him remember a winter's day, crossing the Kunetzky Most, the Smith's Bridge, in Moscow — a bitter cold winter's day. And the house-keeper where he had taken the shoes for the Mademoiselle Du Franne of the Ballet, had looked kindly at him, seeing how red his nose was, and she had given him just such vodka. . . .

Ivan was happy, and felt anxiously for the whistle in his waistcoat pocket. A pewter whistle, costing a penny.

The Architect led them up two flights of stairs, and opened a door at the end of the hall. A long gay room across the end of the house, the walls decorated with elephants and birds, castles, ships, and

cats and giraffes. By the wide window was a table, a very low table. At one end sat Anushka, stiffly, like a doll princess. At the other the little girl, cheeks pink like an early apple. Near-by, the Princess of Orchard Street, who rose to greet them.

"How nice," she said. "This is my husband, *Maestro,* who brings things in his pockets. And this is my daughter, 'Cindy, the Dowager Mother of Anushka, whom you saw the other day."

The mother of Anushka greeted her guests gravely, and shook the sealing-wax hands of the five dolls with becoming gravity. They had come a long way to Anushka's party.

And 'Cindy gravely poured milk and water tea into doll's cups first for Anushka, then for her mother, then for Ivan, then for Pyotr. The carved chest was opened, and the cakes produced; Pyotr played the Schumann *Arabesque* on his violin, and then the *Moment Musical* of Schubert, and 'Cindy, gazing large-eyed at him, began to dance up and down the long room. And then Ivan took out the five dolls from the box, and spread the splendid yellow handkerchief shawl that had belonged to his wife on a sofa, and stood behind it and enacted the play so well known to Pyotr, in which Genghishka stole Bobeshka's hat, and Toralinda wept, and Petrouchka rode a horse, with Toralinda in his arms, Genghishka in pursuit, and Bobeshka fought a duel with Genghishka for the flower that Natalinka wore in her hair. And Ivan recited in soft Russian what was happening, and blew his whistle for both a scream and a horn, and Pyotr plucked the D string of his violin for Petrouchka's lute. And 'Cindy

clapped her hands, and made Anushka clap hers also. And the Architect, sprawling in a huge Italian chair like a weary man on Saturday, roared with laughter. And the Princess Lucinda found a tear or two on her cheek.

And when the play was over, and all the dolls had been whisked away over the back of the sofa, and Ivan stood there smiling, rubbing his hands to show there was no trick, little 'Cindy got up and made him a curtsey. Early darkness had come, and a trim black silk maid brought in two brass candelabra with lighted candles in them. And the party was over.

And whirling southward in the blue car, with a crystal flask of vodka in his pocket, old Ivan said to Pyotr, who had in his pocket a lacquer box containing a set of old ebony violin pegs, and three sets of strings — gifts from Anushka — "Do you think, Pyotr — Alexey is come home yet?"

"I tell him," said Pyotr, "this morning, we go uptown to see shop windows and see what shoes they have!"

"You are a good boy," said Ivan, contentedly.

Chapter XI

FOR EVERY WOMAN WHO IS CINDERELLA IN HER HEART, AND FOR EVERY WOMAN WHO EVER WEPT FOR LOVE

CHAPTER XI

And so three years more went by, and the modest little shop in Grand Street flourished, although old Ivan felt a little unhappy to be in the consulting room afternoons; at the back of it, carpeted with red, with a tall chair for the client to sit in, and a red velvet stool for her feet. He felt more at home in his leather apron in Orchard Street than in the black frock coat that Alexey insisted upon his wearing.

But meekly he looked at women's feet, smiled and said *Da* to each Lady-from-Uptown who came; and he made no measurements. He was happier around the corner in the mornings, for ladies came only in mid-afternoon.

"They sleep in the morning," Alexey explained to him.

The slippers fitted perfectly, always, and they came back for more, limed by the canary birds in blue cages, the flower that Alexey always presented to each of them with a bow upon their arrival; by the old man, dexterous like a magician, kneeling before them. So limousines stood in front of the shop nearly every afternoon.

"Where did I get them, my dear?" a leading lady would say to a guest in her dressing-room after a

matinée. "Why, there's an old wizard in Grand Street — a Russian — once made ballet shoes — yes, I'll give you the address — good-looking son always gives you a flower — yes, it's worth the trip down there!"

And less frank, if just as proud, ladies of the upper Sixties and Seventies would smile mysteriously, mystery being the better part of their idler's existence, and say: "They were designed for me, my dear, by a genius — don't you wish you knew who? Always gives me a flower, too."

So, the ladies.

And Alexey, who often went to deliver shoes, and, owing to his Russian manners, not infrequently stayed to tea, began to dream of a chain of shops . . . one in Canal Street . . . one in Fourteenth Street . . . and (why not?) one on Thirty-fourth Street.

The Cinderella Shops, Inc., with a huge slipper of satiny-blue glass hung outside each of these . . . an electric light inside of it. . . . That is what he saw. For Alexey was ambitious.

They now had two floors of the house in Orchard Street for workmen, and stitched the leather that Ivan cut into curious butterfly shapes like Whistler's signature, before they were put together. And Ivan patiently taught them, as he had his first apprentices, many old secrets; how to sew up a shoe inside out, and dip it in hot water, and how with tongs, like the worn brass tongs of his grandfather, to catch it by the toe and pull it right in a second; and how to impart that singularly haunting smell of Russia leather with citron oil and beeswax . . .

and other things. For Ivan was a proud and able craftsman, and regarded each shoe made as deserving all the old careful ritual, despite Alexey's protests that they could not "mek' money" that way. . . .

The four elder boys moved to a floor in a house near-by, and had brocaded blue velvet furniture and a cabinet Victrola. But Ivan and Pyotr kept the cellar to live in, as well as work; for they liked Mrs. Petroff's *borsch* for dinner, and her *chtchi* and *burda*. And they liked Marya's timid tap on the door in the evenings. She would come to sew on buttons that those wretched "washers" ironed off their clothes, or she brought them some little cakes and made them tea, hovering solicitous, maternal, about the small establishment, making it something of a home, leaving her work-basket, or her hat there . . . creating an almost possessive air about her visits to them. A silent trio, of an evening; Ivan smoking, Pyotr working at the table with ink and paper; gentle Marya mending, or reading Marie Bashkirtseff's *Journal* or Hertzen's *Memoirs* — the only books she had — in the unpainful taciturnity of complete accord.

Alexey saw in his mind's eye hundreds of patterns cut all at once with a big machine, some day . . . saw Mestravvik shoes as all important in the world . . . saw them as 'Style Plus.' . . .

Plus what, he was not sure of. 'Service,' he fancied. Or 'Performance. . . .' And at first Ivan hovered over each workman, loth to let any one but himself make anything. But Alexey, with patience, dissuaded him. 'You *mek'* the first,' said

he, 'I *manufacture* all the other. They are differen'. You are the artist, my Father! '

But Nischka's shoes Ivan would let no one touch. And since he always took them to her when she was in town, at the opera, or at her hotel, where Nischka always had a drop of cognac for him — once a vial of gorilka — and chattered with him in his own Russian about Moscow and the life there, he began to learn something of the great world, that had always been more or less a fairy tale in which he had no part.

For Nischka treated him as her friend, and as a fellow artist, and as a personage, and gave him, as to a favored admirer, which he was, quaintly, numerous photographs of herself, in all her rôles, as Manon, and as Louise . . . Carmen . . . Sans-Gêne . . . Francesca, and Desdemona, and Mimi . . . Mélisande. . . .

Which he treasured, and which Alexey openly envied, and said so, for he had never encountered Nischka. "Why don't you take *me* to see the Queen? " he would ask, facetiously. To which Ivan only smiled. He rather enjoyed having something that Alexey did not. For he had some slight terror of his eldest son's brusque ways, his hurry, his single-minded insistence on 'business always first.'

Alexey also had something to say of Nischka's picturesque habit of never paying for her shoes — not one penny since the twenty dollar gold-piece she had put into the 'bood.' Yet Alexey had sent her bills regularly. They were ignored. As for that gold-piece, it had fallen out of the boot for Alexey, seek-

ing money one day for the workmen, and he carried it for a luck-piece.

" She bring us all our people," Ivan would expostulate, when Alexey threatened to go and see Nischka himself and collect the money. " She is my friend. She does not need to pay."

Alexey could not deny this. Nischka had diligently sent innumerable Ladies-in-Cars to the Shop. They were profitable, never haggled. Still . . . Alexey felt irritable about it. Wasn't business!

Then one day Nischka asked Ivan to make a doll for her, to his great delight, for secretly Ivan had more pure joy making puppets than even the most fabulous shoes. This was flattery from the highest.

" Who is t'e toll you wish? " he asked.

" Me! " responded Nischka, without hesitation or shame. " No one ever made a doll of me! They name perfumes after me; they paint sticky pictures of me; they do my head in cold white marble; they name cigarettes for me, but . . . I want a doll that looks like me! Make her Mélisande, please! "

And she gave him many photographs of Mélisande to take home.

And some scraps of silk and velvet, and, shyly, a long lock of her extravagant red hair. " This Mélisande is not to be blonde! " she said.

Ivan began, not only a Mélisande, but several other miniature Nischkas. the faces and hands carved out of shoe-maker's wax and enameled . . . the bodies fabricated in some mysterious fashion of his own, out of soft leather. Into the stuffing of them went spices, however. . . .

And presently the shelf over the fireplace in the

back room had a whole row of stately Nischkas: Desdemona, and Mimi, and Katharine . . . even Marguerite . . . Manon . . . Butterfly . . . Sans-Gêne, and the Guinevere out of an opera that had died with one appearance. For Nischka had given him the entire gallery of her selves . . . not entirely in vanity. Nischka was always whole-heartedly generous to an admirer. . . . A simple soul!

Some stood, and some sat in armchairs, with a tiny velvet cushion for their feet — and shod in elaborate little shoes. And Guenivere had a crown, and so did Marguerite; and Sans-Gêne a coronet. The crown of Butterfly was somewhat odd, with her raiment.

But Ivan liked best to make Queens . . . or Princesses.

Their clothes were a secret between Ivan and Marya Mihailna who, at first femalely jealous of the array of photographs of Nischka, seemed to feel quite differently about the dolls of her, and sewed diligently, and after her fancy, night after night upon them, as immersed in her thoughts as a *vodyany*. Russian water-sprite, in a pool embraced by willows.

And when Nischka returned, and Ivan gave Mélisande to her, between acts at the Opera, Nischka found no cavil with her counterpart's raiment. She was as naïvely pleased as a child, and gave Ivan her flowers of the evening and a bottle of Napoleon cognac, and patted his hand shyly many times.

"And now you will have to make me some shoes like these!" was her farewell, as the Second Act overture began. "I am jealous of 't'e toll'!"

Now Marya Mihailna had a secret worship for Nischka, and stood up to see her, leaning upon the red plush railing in the orchestra whenever she could, and the starved maternality in her soul had extended towards Ivan and Pyotr for vicarious objects, and the tiring of the dolls had given her some deep joy too complex to escape Nischka's notice. And a note, on luscious silver paper, with a bold 'N' at the top of it, like Napoleon's, had come to Marya in Ivan's care, addressed simply to:

'Marya the Gifted'

For of course Ivan had told Nischka how Mélisande had gotten her trailing clothes, and who had given her her coiffure. . . .

But Marya never told what was in that note.

"Give her only *one!*" she had cautioned Ivan, when he would have taken all of the dolls to Nischka. "Do not ever, *golubchik,* give a woman more than one thing at a time!"

"*Da, da, da,* Marya Mihailna;" agreed Ivan, that day, struck with the cosmic wisdom of her warning, "you are a good girl! But a little chair, yes? — for this Mél'san? And a blue cushion?"

"You," conceded Marya, grudgingly, "you can give her a chair, I suppose!"

So all the other dolls stayed in Orchard Street on the shelf; for Nischka, having quarreled with her manager, flew to Paris, taking only Mélisande with her.

And Ivan, who knew little about women, never guessed that Marya wanted 't'ose udder toll' to stay there for her own gentle, jealous pleasure . . . chiefly. They had fulfilled some opulent dream for

her, vicariously. For Marya spent her days in a department store uptown, selling kitchen-ware and stove polish to people. And as she went on adding to the royal ladies' wardrobes, of an evening, her mind ran upon the man who had seduced her with promises of silk and lies of security . . . the man who had not let her have her child. . . .

There are such quiet Marya Mihailnas in every humble street of the world, eking out some dreamy replacement of lost provinces, like a gentle, war-despoiled land claiming its snowy mountain peaks for fields to feed her hungry . . . gentle souls who love but once, and that completely. . . .

Old Ivan had somehow guessed this, though Marya never spoke of it.

One evening Pyotr brought Mikael Mutke to see Ivan, since they had dined in Chinatown upon a teak-and-marble table and eaten strange food with sticks. Mutke had taken Pyotr's education into his own capable hands, and often took Pyotr out to dinner, told him stories, polished his unfolding and inquisitive mind with philosophy and aesthetics, gave him old salt for the raw dish of New York . . . and mellow wine out of his Old World courtesy. . . .

And the grave visitor looked at the row of poignant unstringed puppets on the mantel with great reverence, having made his beautiful Continental bow, with clicked heels, to the shy girl seated at the table.

"You made these?" he asked Ivan.

"We mek'," said Ivan, including with his open hand Marya.

Mutke stood in a brown study for some time, pay-

ing silent court, to each of the dolls in turn. Finally he turned to Marya Mihailna, whose eyes were shining with some feverish excitement. "May I ask what it is that you do . . . otherwise . . . Miss Tazov?"

"I sell pans and wooden spoons to the People," said she, quietly.

A drawn look of pain crossed Mutke's face.

"It mustn't be!" said he. "Would you like — ? No. I shall have to wait a day or two, and then tell you!"

But Marya got up when he rose to leave, and took Pyotr's arm boldly. "Walk me to the Elevated with your friend, little sweedheart," she said, simply.

And Pyotr wondered why her hand on his arm clenched his sleeve, and why she trembled as they walked there, and said good-night to Mutke.

He could not guess, although Mutke had, out of his phychic perception, that to Marya Mutke resembled the man who had allured her for life and chained her to an image. Pyotr felt that something unspoken quivered around them, however.

But he did not understand why Marya kissed him so swiftly and impulsively, in the dark hall, when they returned, and ran up the stairs, with undisguised tears. She always kissed him goodnight . . . but not that way.

"Why do girls cry?" he asked Ivan, on descending to the cellar.

The old man smoked his old cherry-wood pipe for a long time, thoughtfully.

"For love . . . Pyotr," said he, gently.

And Pyotr was mystified.

For Pyotr was fourteen.

Chapter XII

A GNOME OF LONGACRE SQUARE COMES TO ORCHARD STREET WITH GOLD, THINKING TO PURCHASE WITH IT WHAT IS NEVER FOR SALE

CHAPTER XII

Two days later Mutke brought a small man like a Velasquez dwarf and showed him the dolls. And they stood and talked enigmatically, while Ivan looked on and wondered.

The gnome came again the next day, bringing a thin, alert young man with a vast battered book under his arm. They stayed all afternoon, and sent out for supper and talked, and the young man made drawings, sketches, notes. To all of which Ivan listened with keen interest.

And when Marya came home he sent Pyotr up to fetch her, and Mutke came also, and they all consulted.

For the gnome wanted Ivan to make all the shoes for an opulent production of Antigone, and Marya to supervise the costumes.

"Gif' me this fine spirit you haf' here in these toll," said the gnome, almost pleadingly. "Ve haf' neffer hat good shu' on the stage; you can make them, my Old One, better as anybotty."

"And you, my dear," he added, to Marya, "haf' a *flair* for clothe'."

"A very true *flair!*" he reiterated, and Marya's eyes, since she did not understand his words, took in his appreciation as a cellar plant takes its rare

passing beam of sun. She did not seem to see, however, the wolf-gleam in the gnome's eyes, under his bushy grey brows. . . .

But Marya's hands betrayed her agitation.

Mutke saw, however, and his face tightened. He knew too well, however, that you cannot achieve a felicity without danger. . . .

"Here iss money," said the gnome, suavely, producing from his pocket some carelessly crumpled notes, a great many of them. "Do not go back tomorrow to pans and wood spoon, my dear. Come in the afternoon to my office. I haf' good chob for you! Take this now. Your vage ve vill settle tomorrow. All right, Mutke?" Mutke bowed.

"And you, my Old One," the gnome turned to Ivan, "how much you want to make all these shu' ve haf' show you in the book here?"

Mutke intervened, for Ivan was confused. His lips were about to say: "Pay what you like. . . ." Which Mutke had perceived. He suggested: "Mr. Mestravvik would like to talk with his son, I think, Paul. He is the manager. It will be all right."

"All right, all right," rumbled the gnome. "I neffer make contract. My word iss my word. Take this for material. Start right away, pleas', on all of these shu'."

And so Ivan the Cobbler returned to the web of the Theatre, through Nischka's foible for a doll, taking gentle Marya with him.

And other managers got him to make all their historic shoes, and called him Thespis and Old Buskin, at which Ivan was pleased. They sent for him whenever a spectacle was afoot, or was to go

afoot, and taxied him to museums and showed him shoes in old pictures, and boots in books of engravings, and left the details to him.

To all of which Ivan would say: "Yes, I mek'."

And so an unexpected fame came to Ivan, much to Alexey's disgust; for Alexey wanted to make shoes in great quantity, and not just one pair of Greek sandals, no matter what was paid for them.

And the usual mild sub-surface feud that is in every close-knit family reverberated in Orchard Street and Grand Street, and caused much argument . . . almost amounting to open friction.

"One model translated into a hundred pairs of shoes is the only good business," Alexey insisted, angrily. "It takes all of Father's time to look after these theatre people!"

Gavril and Sergey stood by Alexey, leaving Nicolai and Pyotr to side with Ivan.

But Ivan himself seemed somehow to have gotten beyond persuasion. An atavism had claimed him out of his youth in Moscow. He loved the Theatre. He would stand in the wings at dress rehearsal, to see if his shu' were all right, and inhale with deep pleasure the indescribable compound odour of the stage . . . grease-paint . . . the flat smell of scenery that has kaolin in its paint . . . dust . . . last year's perfume. . . .

And Alexey grumbled, but gave in, for he had another difficulty more important to him. For he had fallen violently in love with Marya, who had blossomed like a transplanted desert flower into a beautiful woman, with the excitement of doing something spirited. . . .

She no longer lived in Orchard Street, but she came there in taxis to take Ivan to a consultation uptown, wearing always beautiful clothes . . . invariably in black . . . aloof, but with new lights in her somber eyes and new charm in her oval face. . . .

Alexey began to think she would make a good wife for him.

"*Niet, niet!* Alexey," she would say, teasingly. "You never wanted to marry me before! And yet I was the same Marya Mihailna then as now! And I have two sweedhearts now — your Father and Pyotr! "

Which caused Alexey no peace of mind.

For he did not like to be laughed at.

"Not but what I would . . . might . . . marry you," she laughed, one day; "only you are so pompous! And I like men to be *very* tall! "

Which made Alexey furious.

"The Theatre has got you! " he jeered. "All these men . . . all these pretty clothes — "

"Those men have no more of me than you have," said Marya, with the magnificent quiet fury of all gentle people. "And hereafter you shall have less than that! "

Chapter XIII

GOLD WAS ONCE NOT THE PRICE, NOR THE PENALTY, NOR THE SCOURGE OF LIVING, BUT ONLY THE SUN SHINING ON A BEAUTIFUL WALL

CHAPTER XIII

It was really Mutke, however, who had the unsought key to Marya's radiance.

Pyotr went to his lesson one morning, and paused on the last flight of stairs. For the door was ajar, and he heard sobs in Mutke's studio.

"—but my dear beautiful child—" Mutke was saying, brokenly, but soothingly, over and over again.

"Oh . . . it's you, Pyotr!" he said at the door, suddenly, as Pyotr endeavoured to tiptoe down the creaky stairs. "I think you had better come in. . . . You don't mind, Marya?"

And Pyotr looked, frightened, at Marya, her head in her hands, doubled up in one of Mutke's big chairs, weeping bitterly. . . .

Ivan had told him that girls cry . . . for love. . . .

She looked up through her tears, to see Pyotr, and tried to smile at him. "Of course not," she said, "my little sweedheart!"

"This is the way it is, *golubchik*," said she to Pyotr, more quietly. Mutke is *like* the man I love . . . once . . . do love . . . long time. It was so strong to me, little dove, that I came to see him today. I tell him I love *him*. . . . Mikael there. I can-

not help it. He tell me that he love somebody once, like I love that man. He can never love anyone else . . . like that. I weep, as you see. But I am better. Do *you* love me . . . little dove . . . little sweedheart? "

"Marya. . . . Yes! Of course! " said Pyotr.

" Then I feel better. I go now. Thank you . . . Mikael . . . Mutke dear, for telling me. I think, the first time I see you in Orchard Street, that you are *Him,* come back to me. I . . ."

" And I saw that you were starved for some beauty," said Mutke. " I saw in the clothes you had made for all those selves of Nischka that you must be something, every day, that is lovely. . . .

" It was compassion," he went on, very quietly, " but it *was* love, Marya . . . the better part of love . . . the only kind I have to give to anyone."

" I know now," said Marya. " Yes, I know! It does not hurt so much."

" They all *see,*" she went on, with a restrained hurt back of her voice, staring at the wall, where hung an etching of Méryon's — ' The Morgue and Notre Dame,' with its huddled group of figures, ribald, grim, mocking, gathered about the limp three lines that were a *noyé* fished out of the Seine — " they all see that I am happy about something. Me, who have been dead like that little human there . . . drowned . . . eight years. They all. . . ."

Marya hesitated.

" They try to get me, every day, those men in the theatre, on the street, in the shop. They cannot see that they could not get what makes me look happy, from way inside. . . . Why do not men

know *that* about a woman, Mutke? It was yours, my dear. It was *his*. I did not know what to do with it. That crooked troll wants to fire me . . . I know it . . . because I won't. . . . Not that I care. I can go back and sell pans and wooden spoons to the People. . . ."

" Perhaps you can learn now," said Mutke, gently, " that most of us have to love many, many people . . . have to love music . . . the sky . . . colours . . . the Sea . . . to make up for the one who did not love us too well . . . if at all. Perhaps, Marya Mihailna, you have learned the first lesson of Love. . . . It hits us like the first feeling we have as children, that the sky is blue . . . and endless . . . but the moon seems to us tangible . . . we could put it into our pocket if we could find a pole long enough to knock it down. . . .

" Part of our gradual discovery of ourselves, both these things.

" That one person we love too much is really the symbol of all the people we could love . . . and, alas . . . has some haunting charm to us of every one of them. . . .

" Would you stop up a river . . . at its source . . . a river that waters a wide and beautiful valley, Marya? Think of all the flowers that could bloom . . . all the trees that could flourish, and launch their seedlings on that river, to journey to other places towards the Sea . . . to grow into trees, and become ships and violins and little houses for people to be happy in. . . . Would you, my dear lovely woman, send the crystal spring back into the

earth by covering it up with a flat tombstone? Stifling it?

"Do not expect from any one soul all the answer to all of your riddle! It would take very many. . . .

He spread out his large beautiful hands.

"Our hearts," he went on, "are like hands. We must not grasp with them, to possess. There is no possession in the true world that you live in . . . and Pyotr . . . and I. . . .

"Do you see, Marya Mihailna?"

Marya's face shone like an alabaster vase lighted from within.

"Yes," she said. "*Da* . . . Mutke. I do see. I do understand. . . ."

"Women seem to find it a more difficult lesson than men," said Mutke, leaning into the curve of his grand piano like a Pagan giant seeking to derive strength from some hillside source of rock from whence he had come.

Cords stood out on his wide forehead, but his voice was quite steady, and exceedingly gentle.

"For the reason that they *are* possessive, by primal nature," he said, dreamily, as if he spoke to others . . . elsewhere. "But see how far we have left much of our primal nature, striving to replace it with gentler forces. . . . Could they learn, more of them, that all of us belong, in a sense, to all the rest of us, and that to girdle a birch-tree is . . . eventually . . . to kill it, then we might have, once more, an Age of Bronze, which . . . some day, by a psychic transmutation that is in the very offing . . . might become a Golden Age . . . where gold is not the Price . . . nor the Penalty . . . nor the

Scourge . . . of living, but only the sun on a beautiful wall. . . ."

One of the two 'cellos leaning decorously against the fireplace like silent guests gave out a curious throb of sound, as if a ghost had plucked it, as if some tension in the room had ended.

They all three sighed with relief.

For Mutke had not been speaking to either Marya or Pyotr.

Marya held out both hands, which Mutke held for a moment, but he did not kiss them.

"Goodbye, Mikael Mutke," said she, softly. "This was what I wanted. Needed. When it has cured that old hurt . . . as it will . . . may I come back again?"

She stood a moment, absently patting Pyotr's cheek, with her arm around his shoulders, but looking at Mutke.

"You will never have gone away," said Mutke, simply.

And as Marya's footfalls died away on the stairs outside like a *diminuendo* of muted clarinet notes with promises in it, Mutke went over and closed the door, and sank into a chair.

"Pyotr . . . my little friend," said he, brokenly, "the gods try us at times, with all that our natures find it most difficult to withstand. Some day remember this. And do not take an occasion that is not essentially yours. Do not take a theme in music that another has caught out of the ether, and use it for your own . . . no matter how much you may need it . . . nor the love of a woman that was meant for another man, however unworthy of it. It would be

very easy, Pyotr, to do all of these things . . . particularly the last.

"I do not think we can have any lesson today, my child. . . ."

Pyotr found nothing to say for a moment, for something had happened to him akin to that feeling he had sometimes at a symphony, when all the strings and wood-winds and drums had achieved a magnificent chord.

"Be always very kind to Marya," said Mutke. She needs kindness. She has a love for you. . . . The better part of love . . . she needs to have."

"I do not need any lesson today," said Pyotr.

Chapter XIV

"CLOSE THE EYES, PLEASE — IF YOU WOULD HAVE GLASSES OF CRYSTAL"

CHAPTER XIV

And that day Pyotr hurried down town from his violin lesson at Mutke's studio torn with many feelings, to make Ivan eat some lunch; for the old man always forgot to do that, until his head ached. For his riches of leather and color that he worked with made him a little drunk, artist that he was. And as Pyotr ran down the cellar stairs and opened the door he heard a childish voice prattling to Ivan, and paused.

It was not one of the usual clients of Orchard Street.

Ivan never turned a child away, as much as Alexey protested that new styles had to be invented every week to meet the growing demands of their shop and that he must not cobble any more. " New models we have to have all the time, my father," he would insist.

Alexey could never see that Ivan was getting old, and must not be hurried, though Pyotr could.

No, this slim scrap of a little girl with a mop of golden curls was not from Orchard Street. She had one slim little foot on the bench, and there was a piece of white chamois skin held around it by her fingers. And she was telling Ivan how to make some shoes, evidently.

And Ivan was listening with respect.

And Pyotr was amazed. Ivan the Cobbler had met his match. Not even Madame Nischka ever told him *how* to make shoes, as exalted as she was, and this captious child was doing just that.

She looked up, and a shy smile took hold of her pointed little face and made a heart of it. She was like a pixy, an elf, a changeling, an eft-child indeed.

"See, Pyotr," said his father, "the Mother of Anushka has come to see us. She wants some dancing shoes." The little girl extended her hand, and Pyotr gravely kissed it. He had somehow learned to do that at the Settlement House, where he had been the beggar-poet in a pantomime. There had been no one to try it on, since, but Pyotr had not forgotten his histrionic training from the girl of the Neighborhood Playhouse who had staged that pantomime. This occasion seemed to demand the gesture.

The little girl seemed quite used to such homage, however, and smiled up at him roguishly.

"You came to Anushka's party," she observed.

But Pyotr was speechless, for Pyotr was now fifteen, and this was the child who had flattened her nose one day against the window of a blue car, and had gazed at him such a long time.

"Your nose isn't flat any more," he found himself saying.

"Clothespin," said the little girl, as if that explained the matter, and she put up her hand and felt of her admirably thin, pointed nose appraisingly, and laughter gurgled up out of her slim throat.

"How are 't'e toll' ? " she inquired.

"You like to see? " asked Pyotr. And he went to

fetch the chest in which they all lay, their extra caps and cloaks and lutes and books and other appurtenances that had been added from time to time by Ivan being now in little loops of leather inside the lid.

And the Dowager Mother of Anushka gravely took them all out and dressed them.

" I," she observed, " like Petrouchka."

And something fluttered in Pyotr's throat, like a bird.

" I will give him to you," said he. " He will dance for you when you are sad, and on days when it rains. He will tell you stories, and he will play his lute for you."

And Ivan, listening, smiled to himself. For the magical child who had so gravely, so minutely, instructed him how she wanted her dancing shoes made, even to the red thread stitches, was like a golden child out of an icon. Surely, she should have the doll Petrouchka.

He stitched those little shoes diligently. Making ballet shoes for a child was really like tying up — if you knew how — something small and agile, like a kitten, in a piece of pliant chamois, padded at the toe. They were very little labour. He had already stitched, with quick small stitches, the two red leather butterflies that Her Majesty had ordered for the toes.

" You give him to me? " said the little girl, and drew her breath in sharply. Two bright spots appeared in her cheeks, and her blue eyes shone like crystal. And then, gravely, she put her childish lips to Pyotr's cheek and kissed him, as a child kisses,

warmly and with abandon. Then she sat down on a stool and took Petrouchka on her knee, and tried to work his complicated strings. For Petrouchka had more strings than the other dolls. He was more complicated, and Ivan, in order to enable him to play his lute, had made many extra rings, and threads, which 'Cindy managed to make considerable tangle of.

"*You* fix it," she said, finally, not petulantly, but wistfully.

And Pyotr deftly untangled the strings with his nervous fingers — his violin had taught him to be deft, and 'Cindy, an expectant peri, at the gate of a carnival, tucked her hands into the bosom of the little apron that she wore, kicked her feet together and crooned a wordless monody, the pæan of a happy child.

And somehow, Pyotr, who had been seeing — in his mind's eye — a dark-haired child dancing to a hurdy-gurdy in Delancey Street, began to see that child, the image of dancing, differently. And a poem he had once found in a magazine came back to him, a little:

A child dancing to a random tune,
Feet and hands aflame;
Caught up like a haunted, vagrant leaf
In a whorl of feckless wind.
Dancing a moment's snatch of Carnival
Across the grey, grim city-acre. . . .
Daft from some far Elysian spring. . . .
Mad . . . and rapt. . . .

Tanagrane.

And that image became 'Cindy, dancing one afternoon four years ago, in a high vaulted Italian room in the East Seventies. The two images crossed, blended; and the little dark street girl became golden. Her black dress became 'Cindy's blue pinafore, the hurdy-gurdy became some unheard, unwritten music that had been steeping in his brain for weeks, that he wanted to play on his violin, and couldn't. It became clearer now.

"If Petrouchka dances for you," he observed craftily.

He had learned craft at the Settlement House, in dealing with the girl who kept the library, in order to wheedle certain rare books out of their locked shelves . . . books with pictures of temples and ships and things. The girl had liked to be wheedled. He had learned that. He was already a novice, a practising novice in the great art of dealing with womankind, who in their unstable fashion, in their cosmic pathos, would like to be asked, and beguilingly, for the very thing they would like to give, bountifully, if only some one understood that they liked to be asked, in just the right way.

Hence Pyotr and his guile.

"If Petrouchka dances for you, and plays his lute, too, will you dance for him? And *I* will play my lute for you."

The little girl bowed her head many times vehemently. She was pleased. "Very well," said Pyotr. "Close the eyes, please."

He had learned the phrase from an optician, who said that, while making him read the charts across

the room. For the Settlement had decided he needed glasses, he read so much.

First you looked at a candle-flame and said whether it was on the right or the left of a line made of silk. And then you read, across the room:

B X D K F
GWTUI
wjklo

and other strange words. Pyotr had wondered ever since if they were words that you could command the tide with, like King Canute, of whom he had heard at the Settlement. And Mikael Mutke had told him about the tide one afternoon, when they had taken a walk around the Battery; told him that the moon kept it from covering New York up and running into the windows, and making all the taxicabs float. . . .

Or maybe, Pyotr thought, if you said those words to a cat, he would have to do things for you, like the Sorcerer's broom brought water for the Apprentice. . . .

He was always saying them to the big trucks that tried to run over him in the street, like elephants with wheels on them: 'B X D K F! GWTUI! *wjklo!*'

But the trucks never stopped at all. It was very puzzling, what those words could be for, since cats in the street only looked at him with suspicion and ran away, if he spoke to them, even in a whisper, that way.

And he had to bring up coal from the place under the stoop to the third floor just the same.

'Close the eyes, please!' he repeated to 'Cindy, firmly.

'Cindy was obedient, but cheated with one eye, after the manner of womenfolk. Not unobserved, however. For Ivan saw her.

And Pyotr put Petrouchka on the floor and arranged his lute for him to start with, for Petrouchka found it difficult to tune that lute.

Ivan produced the jew's-harp, and the dance was on.

Perhaps Petrouchka danced a little like that Australian bird whose angular movements spellbind the female of the species, along with the row of red pebbles he has collected in order to woo her with wealth also — females desiring both charm and goods, in Australia, at least.

For Pyotr was watching 'Cindy, and not the puppet-strings, and was therefore not an able puppeteer.

She found no fault, however, even though Petrouchka had no red pebbles.

It is said that the coy bird in Australia finds little fault, either, with her swain's antics, the homage of his wooing being more important to her than his lack of technique. Vanity . . . some have said. Perhaps the old fabled quality was ever the cloak of diffidence . . . and not so very mysterious.

'Cindy clapped her hands at the end, and then looked towards Ivan, since she was really holding court, and must not neglect anyone.

He held up mutely the tiny dancing shoes, finished, and she hastened to put them on, and to ele-

vate her slight weight on the toes, and to beam with gratitude. "Nice!" said 'Cindy, sufficingly.

Pyotr had taken his violin out of its case and tuned it. His red silk handkerchief tucked under his chin, he looked far away into gypsy forests. The Roumanian blood of his mother claimed him. He saw flickering fires in a clearing. He saw a slim blonde *gorgio,* a stranger to the dark brooding figures about her, standing quietly by a white birch-tree. . . .

The unwritten music that he had dreamed for weeks came to him now very clearly.

And he played it. It had come from nowhere at all, unless out of his dead mother's crooning, long before he knew he had had a mother. It was a race memory that fluttered among his violin strings. Even old Ivan was startled at the clear, thin, half-sad, half-gay melody that Pyotr built up, amplified and elaborated. For Pyotr was wishing very hard. He saw beyond that pine forest to a theatre . . . he saw a blonde princess dancing to music of his, music written down on paper . . . played by a number of men in black coats and white shirt-fronts.

Ivan had taken up the long-stemmed cherry pipe that very rarely he smoked, and beat time with it. Out of the corner of his eye, Pyotr saw him as the Conductor of some dim orchestra of Brooklyn Bridge harps; waving tree branches in a storm; trumpets, drums, balalaikas, large and small.

Little 'Cindy, on her toes, seemed to be waiting in the wings of that imaginary theatre, beyond Ivan's workbench, for definite cue, to emerge, to be the sylph of the forest, to be a dryad, startled out of

shyness into being a god-nymph, and Pyotr instinctively made a three-stringed chord — he had learned the difficult trick of it only that day — and *that* released her feet.

Pyotr became a magician; he led her through the labyrinths of quiet forests, on carpets of pine needles; he quickened the tempo, let it fall to pleading, and she drooped.

For she was as instinctive a dancer as Pyotr was a musician. And some unconscious thread — shuttle of feeling — between them, at first shy and timid, yet sure, strengthened and wove a sort of gossamer scarf between them, in which they tossed and caught flower petals, little apples, and light-hearted shining jewels, and let none of them fall. Pyotr was never to forget a phrase of that music, half-born of 'Cindy's willingness to be led, half-born of the haunting race-harmonies steeping in his blood, crude New York sounds, and spindrift of music from Nowhere.

He found an *andante* in the depths of his violin, and the child obediently became a tree that drooped to the earth, picked up Petrouchka's cap that had fallen to the floor when he had made his last bow, cradled it in her hands, lifted it as an offering to the Sun (the huge copper pan, hanging on the wall), knelt, lifted her thin little arms, pantomimed whatever Pyotr wished her to, through his four strings and the *frisson* of his horsehair bow (out of the name of an Arab horse, his teacher had once told him). . . .

And then Pyotr became aware that someone had come in, that Lucinda stood in the door, spellbound, come to take home her child; and a terrible constraint took hold of him, and his fingers fumbled,

and he made a lame ending to his *andante cantabile*, struggled out of it into an improvised humoresque, enabling 'Cindy to rise from her prostrate attitude and run dancing on her toes to her mother, who had tears in her eyes.

Lucinda embraced her, and then silently crossed the room with 'Cindy clinging to her hand, and held out the other to Pyotr.

Pyotr's face was burning. For there was admiration, tribute and something else in Lucinda's shining, tear-filled eyes.

" Beautiful! " she whispered. " I salute you! "

So began Pyotr's career as a composer.

And 'Cindy, cloaked, fur-hatted, shod once more in street boots, hugging the doll Petrouchka to her chest, simply looked at him, before she went out. And the thing that fluttered in his throat almost choked him.

For Pyotr had found some of the eternal magic of living, and witnessed some of the universal pain of it, too, all in one day. . . .

Chapter XV

TRIBUTE TO THE FOUR GRIM HORSEMEN

CHAPTER XV

IT BECAME the troubled year of 1917. The War had finally claimed of each of New York's streets its quota of men between certain ages; and Alexey and Sergey and Gavril all fell within them, and eventually departed for camps, leaving Nicolai in charge of the Cinderella Shop, with Pyotr and Ivan to help him.

But since none of them really comprehended the laws of demand and supply, especially in bad times, two years found the ' boot ' in some embarrassment. The rent was overdue, bills uncollected, and the clientele scattered, by the exigencies of the war itself, upon Alexey's return.

Sergey and Gavril came back somewhat later, Sergey with an arm lost, and Gavril with a shrapnel dent in his skull.

And they all set to work to reclaim, to expand, to catch up.

Partly owing to the shortage of leather in the world and Paris' abandonment of shoes with tops, Alexey anticipated New York's compliance and set out pioneering to persuade women to wear slippers at all times, winter and summer. Particularly since now they rode more in motor-cars, and walked less.

And within three years they had three Cinderella shops in operation; the old one in Grand Street and

new ones on Fourteenth Street and Twenty-third Street.

Pyotr and Nicolai had taken over the designing; Gavril the manufacture and Alexey the executive chair.

Alexey had left the army a Captain; he saw a growing procession of Cinderella shops marching uptown; saw that the world had gone frivolous in hysteric reaction from war; set about finding and innovating new materials to captivate the eye of Woman.

For Alexey astutely reasoned that, with the shortening of skirt, vanity as to feet would increase.

Unobtrusively he bought, in the leather markets, odd lots of materials, never before used: experimented with alligator and brocade and sent to Paris for exclusive models, taking patterns from the fantastic French modes of less leather, with straps in gold and satin, and other novelties.

"Periods of economy make style," he had read somewhere, and here was a world bent upon gaiety, but with little money to spend.

Little by little he built a new edifice of business, sold his models (with Ivan's touch of imagery) to all sorts of shops, in and out of town; lived on a literal shoestring, skimped, saved and improvised to make every skin produce the maximum number of units.

They were all hard driven for five years.

Pyotr's violin lessons ceased, for he could no longer accept Mutke's generosity of training without paying him, despite the master's open offer.

Vicissitude claimed the Mestravvik's once more,

and Pyotr took a job playing his violin in a theatre, making patterns in the shop all day, as did Nicolai.

Some recurrent tide caught them up, many years after the war. Alexey began to import antelope, *chevreau,* even snakeskin.

A sudden passion for reptilians took New York one season, and at the same time Alexey's carefully built reputation for "always something new" went over.

In one single year the Mestravviks became famous, just as Alexey had dreamed.

New workshops had to be found; he opened five new Cinderella Shops; he took a mid-town apartment for himself, and tried to urge Ivan and Pyotr to come with him.

But they loved Orchard Street, and could not be lured away.

Nicolai, as time went by, succumbed to the seductions of a dark girl in an Eighth Street bookshop that he frequented, and married her; Gavril found a similar fate with a girl in Brooklyn; Sergey, who early in life had wanted to be a ferry-boat captain, wandered the world in search of rare materials to assuage the vanity of woman.

Advertising increased to the point of megalomania; traffic, and the pressure of living, multiplied unceasingly.

Only Ivan, journeying uptown sadly each day with Pyotr to the designing rooms over the newest Cinderella Shop on Fifth Avenue, wished life could be otherwise than it was.

For to the others all this was the realization of the fabled wealth of "estates in Thrace," the treasure

of the Indies indeed; an excellent solution of things in an excellent world.

But Ivan — he lamented his days of dreaming over bright leather in the old shop, now given over to dust, but retained at his request. And Pyotr reflected forlornly upon his unfinished rhapsody, *East of Orchard Street*.

They had both been fitted into the System of Commerce.

" Why, we couldn't do without you, my Father! " Alexey would say to Ivan, with the pompous gaiety of success. And to Pyotr: " What on earth do you want? We are *made!* Can't you see that? We all have our jobs — fat ones! We are the Mestravviks of New York and Paris . . . soon of Bombay, London, Rome and . . ."

Chapter XVI

CONCERNING THE COMPLEX PERSONALITY OF TUKKIM

CHAPTER XVI

A CABLEGRAM was handed to Ivan by Alexey, one morning, at their offices.

"From Nischka," said Alexey.

"What does it say?" asked the old man, for he had never learned to read English, though he spoke it very well.

"She says: 'Charming, Maestro, a thousand kisses,'" said Alexey gloomily. "I wish she'd remember to send a thousand dollars sometimes. She owes us. . . ."

Ivan smiled gently. "Do not ever trouble Nischka for money, my son," he said. "She brought all our first business to us. Do not forget that."

"Yes, I know," said Alexey. "But that was years ago, and you make for her at least thirty-two pairs of shoes a year, which at twenty-two fifty . . . seven hundred dollars a year at least. Besides, look at all *your* time it takes."

Ivan refolded the cable carefully and put it in an old leather case that he took from his inside pocket. There were other yellow and blue cablegrams there, from Nischka. He treasured them. Some said, "*Merci bien, Monsieur le Sorcier.* N." — or "Magnificent. N." For Nischka, true child of the theatre, never forgot, wherever she was, Paris, Rome, Vienna,

to send applause. *She* needed it herself. She could no more live without it than she could live without flowers and beautiful clothes and boxes of lapis lazuli, and her marmoset, named Tukkim, who because of his size, could be tucked into a pocket. He was very old for a marmoset, and he suffered from quinsy. He chose all her hotels for her. There were many hotels that Tukkim did not like, particularly if they did not have little oranges for him to eat.

"He has sensitive nerves," Nischka would explain to an irate manager, having taken rooms, only to move out of them half-an-hour later.

"He has an extraordinary sense of smell!" she would explain to her friends in a café, when Tukkim violently objected to being there at all. For Tukkim being agile had been known to hurl wine glasses about, and wreck places, when loose and angry.

The malicious said, of course, that Nischka pinched him when she wanted to leave any particular place. Others said she had a sharp brooch that she thrust inside Tukkim's little velvet jacket.

But the world is not wanting in malice and Tukkim remained, as it were, her prime minister.

"Well," said Alexey, turning away, "next time she's in town I'm going to see her about our little bill. I've never met her, you know. She's rich."

"Do not do that," said Ivan once more. "We do not need it."

Now Alexey, shrewdly suspected (resenting as he did, that he, the head of Maestro, Inc., had never met their most illustrious client, who ignored his letters

to her, and his bills), that Ivan got a vast deal of pleasure out of these cables. Still, business was business.

It irked him that Nischka would send Ivan a scrawl of a letter, in green ink, full of childish sketches, almost a royal mandate, as an order to make eight pairs of slippers thus and so — leaving the details to him.

He exploded later in the day to Sergey, home from India with several bales of temple lizard skins, a trunk full of Coptic embroideries he had picked up in Afghanistan, and a choice lot of Saracen chain mail of silver; for Sergey had a flair for finding things that could embellish shoes, and always had the courage of his impulses. Alexey grumbled sometimes at the ' junk ' he sent in from wherever he was; but the fact remained that they gradually started the styles.

Sergey had delivered the last batch of slippers to Nischka in Paris, six months ago.

" What the hell does this woman think she is? " Alexey asked. " Treating us like dirt."

Sergey, a tall, good-humored, thin man, of thirty-two, grinned.

" Don't take it so hard, Aleck," said he. " She's a queen. Took me to all the places in Paris. Le Grand Vatel for dinner — L'Abbaye to dance — wound up later at El Garron — know the place? Wouldn't let me pay for a thing. Not that *she* did, either. Nobody lets her. Too damned glad to have her, anywhere. Doors open; *commissionaires'* heels click (lorgnettes do, too!), everywhere she goes. You can't treat Nischka like a dame uptown here. Man, she's

Nischka — that's all. Besides — who brought them all to Orchard Street in the first place? "

"Oh, all right," grumbled Alexey. "So father says. But this's been going on eight or nine years."

"Don't you realize that, if you made her mad, she'd turn away from us a lot of people who copy what she wears? Just by saying: 'Oh, the Maestros! Why, they've gone completely commercial, my dear — have no real style any more.' Don't you realize, Aleck, that 'style' is why we're at the top? "

"And hard work," grunted Alexey.

"Yeah! " agreed Sergey. "But you'll see her some day and see what I mean. A maharajah gave me a week-end north of Calcutta this winter. But even he didn't give me the feeling of being the choice and honoured guest that Nischka did in one evening in Paris cafés. Do we *need* the money? "

"Of course not," growled Alexey. "It's the principle of the thing."

"Believe me," said his younger brother, as one who had seen much of the world, "no man ever hung on to a principle very long, with Nischka! — Now about those temple lizard skins? We can get them in lots of six hundred. . . . And the Saracen chain mail, cut in butterfly patterns applied to the toe . . . you see? "

Chapter XVII

OUT OF THE FRAGRANCE OF CHURCHES . . . AND SHIPS . . . AND SERAGLIOS

CHAPTER XVII

ALEXEY was standing late one afternoon lost in thought, on the long and always empty thin wedge of neither street nor sidewalk in Longacre Square, with traffic thicker than bees on both sides of him, but the isolation of a desert where he was.

It would be fine to have a special shop . . . a place, very elegant, very precious, beautifully decorated — a sort of gallery, he reflected, with openings — exhibitions, four times a year — auctions of their most beautiful models, never to be duplicated — by invitation only — to a select list of clients. His mind ran on. . . .

The lights changed and changed again and still Alexey stood there, buried in reflection.

It is a good place to think if you do not know of one, and you have to think, that thin wedge of no man's land.

And being a man of decision, Alexey flipped an old silver rouble of the Czar's regime, bearing Ivan the Terrible and Nicolas face to face. And by the coin's decision, walked towards Fifth Avenue in search of such a shop, instead of up Broadway, as he had first intended.

And soon, by the magic of check-books, IVAN was carved in the limestone by a discreet door. That and nothing more.

For Alexey and the boys had gradually absorbed a great man's business and his models, made in Teheran and London — Cloksa by name, and another who took his name from his little birth-city in Italy, Trastemene; and a third in Paris, Poussard, *fils;* and had changed their scutcheons to *Maestro.*

But who was the source of his beautiful designs? His father. So *Ivan* was stamped in the instep of all their shoes. And Alexey dreamed of a swanky shop in Hollywood and the world-wide publicity of the screen.

And one forenoon, Alexey walked in and looked about with pride. For never was such a shop. Along each wall were niches of ebony, lighted from above — little prosceniums; and on a revolving floor a pair of slippers. Two rows of something between chaises-longues and divans in lavender satin ranged down the center of the salon. Cunningly arranged triplicate mirrors, the center one square, the others oval, mounted on old gilt baroque church candlesticks, stood portably adjacent to one another, that the sirens of New York might get worm's-eye, casual-eye and other views of their feet as seen by the populace.

Pyotr was busy with something in a long box at the end of the room.

"Pretty swell room, eh, Petrouchka?" said Alexey. "What are you doing there?"

For Pyotr had two long rows of the treasures to be shown that day on a table and was pouring into them each with a large wooden spoon some faded and dry and (to Alexey) far from prepossessing sub-

stance, which had, however, a most agreeable and haunting odor.

It was a little like an old church and a little like a seraglio, but also oddly like the tarry smell of a sailing-ship.

"What the hell!" ejaculated Alexey.

"I had some dry perfume made by a chemist in Fourteenth Street that I know," said Pyotr, calmly. "It has in it rose leaves, lavender, Syrian olibanum, sandalwood, sawdust, a little ylang-ylang; also some cinnamon bark and some powdered myrrh.

"Makes every appeal," added Pyotr, shaking each shoe thoughtfully and pouring his potpourri back into the box.

"See here," Alexey exploded. "I ordered tuberoses and narcissus to be presented to each of our guests. Women," he explained icily, "like flowers. *Not* dust!"

"Women," said Pyotr, quietly, "like perfume."

And their lifelong antagonism burned between them and Alexey's hands clenched with rage. But Pyotr got his own way for once, for it was too late to remove his perfumed dust from all the glittering array of slippers.

"They did have a damned fine smell," Alexey agreed later to Sergey, who came asking: "Well . . . where've you got the houri hidden!"

Chapter XVIII

THE PROUD SHOULDERS OF DIANA OF EPHESUS

CHAPTER XVIII

A FROWN disturbed Alexey's face one morning, shortly after the opening. He had slept well; business was good; the opening had been a knockout; but the morocco folder on his desk, reserved for new designs, was empty.

"Pyotr!" he muttered. Pyotr was a good boy, now twenty-three; he had imagination, but in business he was nowhere. The ancient enmity that had existed between them since Orchard Street days hit Alexey a thump in the pituitary region of his low Muscovite forehead, as the Slinger's stone struck the Cyclops in his one eye. Pyotr was his brother, but what irritation he felt for him sometimes!

Pyotr could draw, better than Nicolai, but he wouldn't.

At the end of the long row of brass cages to keep spies or customers from stealing ideas, along the north side of the new factory in Long Island City, he had built a special studio for Pyotr — a room with a fireplace, a magnificent library of costume styles, and other things; beautiful Italian furniture, and all that. Yet Pyotr, when called upon, he would find doing nothing, his big sketch block still white; staring out of the window.

To be sure, it was Pyotr who had thought of all the tricky mirrors in the special shop; Pyotr who

had devised silver spider-webs in the arches of some black velvet pumps, with opals for dew, to strengthen the fabulously high heel that the captious Rosemary Cavendish insisted upon for the Follies . . . Nice girl, Rosemary. . . . Alexey had managed to take her out to dinner after the opening. It was she who had decided him, at last, for that fourth figure on the façade of the new shop; where Nischka was to represent the Opera, Miss Lorraine the Theatre; Connie Marsh the Movies. Those four niches were to honour the four Muses who had done most for the House of Maestro, and Alexey had wanted a Park Avenue girl for one — a type — until he met Rosemary. . . . He must tell the sculptor that she was willing to pose. . . .

It was Pyotr who had thought of tiny silver bells in the arches for Miss Lorraine in the really dramatic play of the season, where she had much tense business, accented by those bells — copied all over town in a week.

It had been Pyotr's idea, also, when maps were the vogue, to cut up old parchment maps and apply them — and to make small full-sailed ships in *repoussé* for buckles. . . . Again, he had been seized with an inspiration in a Syrian restaurant one evening, and the result of it had been a piquant note in the season's showing — lightly labeled in the advertisements, Ephemeridae — no less than the royal purple skin of eggplant duly treated with preservative and lacquered.

"Yes, Pyotr had ideas. But why didn't he all the time?" Alexey inquired of his cigar-smoke, as he sat in his office above the shop that afternoon. Business

was business . . . you had to keep at it all the time, not just now and then. . . .

And Pyotr had been drunk, or he was very much mistaken, pretty often lately. Alexey was a drinking man himself, but —

It was all right to take a customer out to a night club, once in a while. They had come near having a row that last time, four weeks ago; and now ——

Alexey wanted some new designs for this very opening downstairs, and Pyotr hadn't made them.

"Why not?" he demanded, while Pyotr languidly lighted another cigarette.

"Didn't feel like it," said Pyotr, good-humoredly.

"Didn't *feel* like it!" Alexey ejaculated. "Why, Pyotr, look here. You have everything you want, don't you? Keep your own hours —"

"No, I don't," said Pyotr, yawning, his arms over his head.

"Where do you keep yourself nights — if I may ask," said Alexey, bluntly.

They all lived separately. Gavril and Nicolai had houses in the country. Alexey lived at a club; Pyotr and Ivan in an apartment in the Forties.

"If you must know," said Pyotr indifferently, "I play at the Golden Princess from eleven until two."

Alexey was startled. "The Golden Princess — why, that's that joint in East Forty-ninth, isn't it?"

Pyotr nodded.

"See here," said Alexey, after some thought, "if it's money you want — the boot always pays, you know." After all, thought Alexey, largely . . . maybe there's a woman in that hole — Golden Princess indeed! *He* wouldn't take anyone there.

"You only have to ask me," he went on. "I never question you, do I?"

They smiled at each other, remembering the old yellow Tartar boot, now in its glass case in the reception room. (Ivan had gently insisted on it.) Along with all the dolls he had made of Nischka as Carmen, Butterfly, Louise, Mélisande, Sans-Gêne. And the puppet dolls were there, too. . . .

And Alexey felt as if he had won, with that little reminder of their childhood in Orchard Street.

"Yes, I know the boot does," said Pyotr gently, "but —"

"Well, then — is it a woman, Petrouchka? I've been twenty-three myself, you know —"

Pyotr shook his head.

"You haven't been playing the Market, have you?" asked Alexey, as he walked up and down the beautiful room, his feet making little bruised sounds on the cork floor (put there since Pyotr found the concrete, even with a thick Chinese rug, too cold and hard — the one request he had ever made about his workroom).

"Market? No . . . what's that?" said Pyotr absently.

"Then, what?" said Alexey abruptly, beginning to get out of temper. Pyotr had always been like that; never saying much; his mind obviously elsewhere. And yet he had always been polite to Pyotr as a child, even though he, Alexey, was thirteen years his senior.

"What *do* you play at the Golden Princess for, if it isn't for money? I daresay they pay you pretty well, though," he added astutely.

Pyotr ran his hands through his hair.

"Alexey," he said, quietly, "look out the window. Do you see one thing but walls . . . smoke . . . chimneys . . . electric signs . . . trains . . .? Do you see one tree? Hear one bird?

"After you leave New York in your car, do you see anything but factories . . . hear anything but machinery, whistles? If I lay my pencil across the shoulders of the little gilded statuette of Diana there on the desk, do you think it will stay there? I'll show you."

The long yellow pencil trembled, vacillated and fell from Diana's gilded shoulders as a water-carrier throwing off her yoke.

"See how exultant she is!" Pyotr went on, still more quietly. "The vibration of all the machines down below, five stories of machines, Alexey, in a building built as strongly as possible, nevertheless will not permit a pencil weighing a quarter of an ounce to rest!"

Pyotr's eyes flashed for an instant.

"Diana has no place here. Rhythm has no place here. The monotony of vibration of all your machines never varies. Excellently run, this factory, Alexey! I congratulate you! But Diana has no place in it. I have no place in it, either!"

Pyotr got up, and thoughtfully went to an old Italian *credenza* against the wall, poured himself a drink of Scotch from a bottle there, and drank some of it. He stood holding the glass, trembling a little.

"Have one," he said.

Alexey shook his head. He was staring at the little

Diana, standing so bravely, poised for flight upon a pomegranate —

Alexey was no fool. Beneath Pyotr's words he felt something without a sting, but deadly. Pyotr was more mature than he thought. Had been thinking a lot, while idling away his days here.

"What's that stuff you drink? " he asked, picking up the bottle.

"Does it matter? " said Pyotr.

Alexey smelled it.

"Pretty bad," he murmured. "If you must drink to work, let me send you in some of my customers' Scotch. Some rye from Dr. Lessing's good drug-store would be better for you, though."

Alexey felt he was being fair.

Pyotr put down the rest of his drink, a stiff one, and lighted a cigarette.

"You see," he resumed, "you don't really like to have a figurine of Diana here. Hurts you somehow. *Not* business! In a way, you don't like having *me* here, either."

Alexey waved his hand.

"You've thought up some mighty good ideas," he said; "but — "

"Alexey! I play at the Golden Princess from eleven to two each night to have some music. That's the truth. They let me play whatever I want, you see. I compose all the early evening. I try it out there. I have to. They pay me, of course . . . money doesn't mean much to me, though."

Alexey sat down somewhere, rather heavily.

"So that's it," he said. "Then why didn't you ever tell me? "

"Why . . . you and the boys all worked hard, these fourteen years, to get where you are; you spent a lot of money on me, education, music lessons. I *can* draw; so why shouldn't you get something back, was the way I reasoned," explained Pyotr. "But you see, I reckoned without this vibration . . . this factory life —"

"Alexey, I went to Dr. Lessing the other day. My nerves are in a bad way. If you doubt that Scotch he prescribed it. It's as good as there is, these rotten days. I took father there, too. He's tired."

"Father?" echoed Alexey.

"Yes. I think you'd better drop in and talk to old Lessing about him. He's getting too old to come over here every day; stands up too much. Needs a holiday, Lessing said."

Alexey drew a deep breath.

"Why, he *is* sixty-eight," he said, wonderingly. "All right, I'll go to see Lessing — now! You come along, too. I've been so busy the last three years, getting the factory started, then the Specialty Shop — I guess —"

Alexey was really contrite. Alexey's passion for business efficiency had well-nigh blinded him.

He ruminated: Without Father the 'touch' of the unusual will be gone. Pyotr *could* have taken his place, though. But Father? Tired? Getting old? What avail would it be to press the mother-of-pearl button, sixth on the battery on his desk, when a new style was ready, and have twenty thousand pairs of slippers cut smoothly through the piles of leather — if the *unique* were lacking?

"Guess I will have a drink, Pyotr." And he took

one while Pyotr absently balanced his yellow pencil once more on Diana's shoulders. He carefully hung two rubber bands from the ends of it, and suspended from each of them several paper-clips.

But they fell, one and all, as Alexey set down his glass on the shelf in the *credenza,* and made a wry face.

Chapter XIX

IN DEFENCE OF HUMANS DOING WHAT THEY LIKE TO DO

CHAPTER XIX

It was a crestfallen Alexey, who sat opposite the grave, but nervous, jerky Jewish doctor in his consulting room, across a wide plate glass expanse under which were innumerable photographs, extravagantly signed:

To my darling Doctor Lessing
from
Kitta Farman

To Dacius, the Prince of Doctors
from
Madeline

With always an air of leisure, however — leisure enough to listen without haste — his day was exceedingly full. He saw scores of people, and with the true physician's — which is the metaphysician's — sense remembered how they were yesterday, last week, three years ago.

For Dr. Lessing was Physician Extraordinary to the more neurotic of the stage, the writer's craft, the artists. He had progressed from East Seventh Street to Stuyvesant Square (though no one ever minded going to the East River to see him); and thence to

Park Avenue, even as the Cinderella Shops had advanced from Orchard Street to Fourteenth, Thirty-fourth, and upper Fifth Avenue. He had known them all since war days when all of them except Ivan had had the flu; and after ten hours, and many relays, had turned up, staggering for want of sleep, and gotten them all on their feet.

He was still the same jerky, abrupt man, an artist. His manner had never changed with his habitat; the humblest of his East Side patients felt no constraint in his elaborate, expensive Reception Room. He had the passionate Jewish interest in the affairs of life, the human frailties, aspirations, and gaieties of people. He loved people. His shelves had rows of inscribed copies of novels, plays, along with his formidable medical phalanxes. He collected jade and porcelain snuffboxes with the pleased candour of a child, and was proud to show in the little mellow room just off his consulting room, in glass cases, a few prints, a Cézanne, a Renoir, two Dürer originals.

For Dr. Lessing was as truly catholic about objects as about people. He read omnivorously, slept four hours like Bismarck. Patients, tucked away in the little hospital on the East Side that he had made famous for artistic folk, were usually surprised to hear at seven in the morning, that he had dropped in at four, and changed the medicine. He was invariably back at eight, devoted, brusque, with remarkably "seeing" eyes; quick to decide, thoughtful to the last detail.

"Feed this man up a bit; give him an eggnog when he gets low," he would say to a nurse. "He's

a nice chap — nervous — don't *talk* to him! " as he went out the door.

" I don't know," he would say, " about this, but we'll try it. . . . Think it did you any good? No? Well, go down and see Dr. Townsend, *he* knows all about it."

A great doctor, of a race that peculiarly makes good doctors, for perhaps the simple reason that their human sympathies are terribly alive. With an endless capacity for listening to the troubles of the heart they are natural psychiatrists.

" You see, Aleck," he was saying (he always was informal with patients, made them his friends), " the old man has worked too hard; ought to have a rest. Nothing wrong, you know, except age . . . nor very happy."

" Happy? " said Alexey. " What is that? Do we have it — happiness — in this world? "

Dr. Lessing's grey-white, tired face flushed a little.

" Well, you're doing what you want to do," he observed. " *I* am, too. You like business, expansion — and using that feeling for style that you have in you.

" But not everybody is alike. Your father is really a craftsman. He'd rather make shoes on a bench than what you give him to do.

" Can't transplant an old man, after fifty years of one thing. Habit is a sort of necessary carapace, sutured like a dissected map. If you take out one country, the continent becomes disorganized. . . . Shell encloses a man's life for him. He has been like a crustacean, used to cool earth and quiet (of mind), who's made to march on pavements in a police

parade. . . . Oh, I know, Aleck, the last ten years, since the war, have doubled the pressure. But where are we all going? What for? There is a new disease every day — something strange, formidable, to fight. We don't know much — "

"Maybe the cumulative effects of bootleg alcohol," Alexey observed, drily.

Dr. Lessing waved his fine surgeon's hand, spatulate, sensitive, at his library.

"People have always needed alcohol," he said, dispassionately. "Why not give it to them? You and I grew up under the old times — golden age . . . golden rye . . . golden champagne . . . free and easy, not this rotten speakeasy pressure to drink hard.

"Don't blame the youngsters of today, Aleck, for their bad drinking. How could they know how to drink? No chance to learn.

"Anyway, they are up against different, rather appalling things, that we didn't have to fight. The girls all want clothes — lots of them; gin instead of flowers. Their idea of security — from a man — has incredibly magnified. The boys come in here, too, full of trouble.

"Is it much wonder, since money seems the answer to them, that old, gracious honour has grown stale in the world? But they have a code. Let her down, is a phrase of it; stand him up is another. *They* mean a lot by it.

"New chambers in the brain being developed: mechanistic . . . psychic powers, some think, either coming back from atrophy into use, after fifteen thousand years, or merely using up the last brain-

matter to be more mechanical minded. When we finish up with them, we're done for as a species. The development of these reserves will react on all our strung-up nerves, our ganglia, resulting in a general short circuit. Our nerves were only built to withstand a certain voltage. That's why alcohol is indicated. Give 'em " — he smoked incessantly — " better alcohol, if you can, but don't expect the children to get along on low wages or an emancipated idea of life.

" This afternoon " — turning over his calendar — " a girl . . . department store, eighteen dollars a week. . . . She lives on it, somehow. Malnutrition; and, from standing up all day, blind headaches. Fallen arches in a year or two. Wants what? Alcohol, immediate, to pep her up to stand her job. Marriage? Yes! If the man could support her. *How* can he? These days!

" The appalling lack of interest that makes people sick. Why have *you* no interest — no hobby, Aleck? " he asked, sharply. " Me. I collect snuff-bottles and books — "

" No time," said Alexey, tersely.

" But what will you have accomplished when you have laid the old man in his grave — and your brother out there, in a sanitarium?

" They are artists, those two," he said, very gravely, " and the pressure of commerce has done them both in. Better send them away somewhere, for at least a year. Your father needs it, and Pyotr needs to carry on music. Can't you send them to Vienna? I was born there — and even now, with the war and all that (I was there last summer), it still is a gay

place. I wouldn't send them to Moscow — make the old man too sad. You *can* send them anywhere, can't you? "

"Yes," said Alexey. "Is this what Pyotr really wants to do? "

The Doctor nodded. "Pyotr's tried for years to be a cog in your machine, and it's killing him," he said quietly. "Let him have a year of the best teachers in Vienna and Paris — see a little of the world — *you* have, you know — and see if he hasn't got some beautiful music in him.

"I worship music," added Dr. Lessing, as he rose and held out his hand. "Tell Gavril to come in and see me soon. I want to look at that thing in his head again. Nick all right? How's the kid? "

He had taken care of the entire family of the Mestravviks in one half-hour with a sort of résumé of the scattered household, with whose ills and joys he had been intimately acquainted for fifteen years.

"Thanks, old man," said Alexey.

Chapter XX

THE FIRST FAREWELL PREPARES US SOMEWHAT . . . FOR ALL THE OTHERS

CHAPTER XX

PYOTR had not been entirely truthful to Alexey. For there was a woman with reticent candid eyes, who came every evening to the Golden Princess; who sat alone despite many invitations to do otherwise.

And he had played for her alone for many weeks until it had dawned upon him that she came there to be played to. And one evening he felt impelled to go and speak to her, and she had broken into little disjointed speeches, turning an old ring around and around on her middle finger.

And he had devoured her openly with his eyes and had taken for granted that the look in hers was response.

She loved someone else, she had told him eventually, and she came there to drink and, she added, with utter graciousness, " for his music to do good to her." She was Danish, she told him, too; her ancestor had been the ambassador of Napoleon, sent to bring the unhappy woman who had become Empress to the frontier. She was as tall as a goddess should be and as fabulously blonde as corn silk. And Pyotr loved her.

And now this very afternoon, since he was sailing tomorrow, he had gone to see her.

"You see how it is, I am placed," she had said. "You know so much, I think you had known the man I love does not love me. Did you not know that?"

"I thought it was a question of money," said he, forlornly. "I came to say good-bye and to offer you what I have in the bank . . . if that would help."

The sad goddess laid her hand on his arm and stood struggling with some tears that would neither be born nor go back into their fastnesses.

"You love a woman like that?" she asked, chokingly.

"How else is there to love?" asked Pyotr, simply.

"No, Peter," she said, brokenly, gratefully, "it is not money. That man is married. He loves his wife, no. He has million. But he cannot give her up. He has family. His position. He would like me—"

"But good God!" Pyotr interrupted. "Anyone who loved *you* would give up everything in the world! I would, right now. Vienna. Music. My old Father, whose heart is set on this holiday with me there in that old city. Dovrée . . . my darling . . . can't you see that all this is not real? That this man will neither take you . . . nor let you go? Can't you see the difference between us? Can't you see where this will end . . . in Nowhere?"

Dovrée walked slowly to the other end of the room and back, as if a caryatid were testing the burden on her head, before taking her appointed place, poised, calm, in some lonely porch of the Carriers of Flowered Grief . . . whose pain had been gathered up into the certain beauty of inevitability.

She had conquered these two tears.

She gathered more closely around her shoulders the thin Chinese red scarf that she wore, as if to tighten her frail armour for the conflict, the supreme conflict of sacrifice.

"Will you please go?" she asked, in a queer, dead voice.

"It is how it is with me. I love!

"You don't even want to see me again," asked Pyotr, "when I come back?" He spoke dully, not with hope, but puzzlement, for it was clear to him that she cared very deeply for something that he had, but not for himself.

"Not more," said Dovrée, as dully.

And Pyotr went slowly down the stairs.

He stood on a curb, as arrested, as fixed there as a diver, helpless in his heavy leaden shoes, might stand on a curb, the thick but navigable density of deep-sea water withdrawn.

No use to go back, to ask: "Why not love someone who loves you?"

No one ever did, in this world.

Pyotr was a fatalist at heart. He did not deal in "ifs." Whatever happened, the next thing was how to get from here . . . well . . . somewhere else.

Many taxicabs paused expectantly in front of him.

But Pyotr heard nothing but the words: "Not more." Yesterday a quaint usage of English. Today a bell that rang in his ears.

He saw nothing but a tall figure in a Gulf-Stream-blue dress and a Chinese vermilion scarf . . . the arms inert at her sides, but her hands clenched in

the fringe of that scarf, as if to hold tightly her frail decision.

He had gotten his shot.

It is not a matter of age nor experience to know it, when it comes.

"If the gods would only blind us when we have to *look,* too, as well as *go!*" muttered Pyotr ". . . and go on seeing . . . and not having . . . anything."

He was suddenly in a taxi, going somewhere.

"Go fast. Anywhere," was all that he could say.

"Park all right?" asked the driver, not unsympathetically. "What'ye think of the Fight?"

But since Pyotr did not answer, the Fight remained undiscussed, as it deserved.

How many speeding lights of taxicabs in the arabesque of grey driveways through the Park . . . any Park . . . represent spent people who have to go, and swiftly, away from something, to collect the wherewithal of soul to endure stopping somewhere, is not recorded as yet.

The low, squat, resentful little light-towers . . . pygmy lighthouses in the roads of the Traffic Ports of Call, probably know, probably keep some gloomy *dossier* in their mechanical minds, to while away the time.

Two lovers.
One man alone.
Two lovers. Green light.
One woman alone.
Two lovers. Red light.
Three drunks.
One man alone . . . dead.
Two lovers. . . .

For taxicabs have several uses.

"Like to try Riverside a while, Boss?" said the driver.

"Yes. . . . No. . . . Where are we?" asked Pyotr.

"Been around the Park four times," said the driver. "Fifty-ninth again."

'Where to? Where to? Where to?' Pyotr's brain had been hammering a long time, to the rhythm of the taxi's rattle. Who was there to go to? A drink? No. This was beyond drink. Mutke? Out of town since a week ago, giving a series of recitals. Father? Ought to have been asleep long ago. Sailing in the morning. Mustn't wake him up. Pyotr had few friends.

"Driver . . . do you know where there are any . . . ?"

"Speakeasies? Lots of'm. Boss. Nice place in Forty-ninth. Golden Princess —"

"No," said Pyotr, "do you know where there are any . . . women!"

The driver scratched his head.

He had been asked many things lately, but this was a new one.

"You mean — ?"

"Yes," said Pyotr.

"Well, I ain't heard of any in a long time, these days," said the driver. "It's all kinda diff'rent. Lemme see. . . . Down in. . . ."

But Pyotr's mind had gone on clicking like the meter in front of him, only a million times faster: *'Where to, where to, where to . . . ring-a-hama ring-a-hama. . . . Dunk. Dunk. Vi-lets . . . vi-*

lets. I-ee . . . I-ee . . . I-ee . . .' buzzed a fly on a window-pane.

He had already forgotten the random question that had leaped out of some pain-drunken depth of himself. He had a sudden stabbing vision of the cellar in Orchard Street, of Marya Mihailna sitting sewing under the lamp.

White fingers. Dark hair in a knot. Purplish lights in it. . . .

But he had said good-bye to Marya two days ago, since she had much to do.

A flat ventriloquial voice, low in his throat, gave an address in East 54th Street, automatically.

That the fare always knows what he wants, or if not, better give it to him anyhow, if he's drunk, is in the lexicon of all taxi-drivers.

"He's thought of somethin'," muttered the driver.

Pyotr pushed the second bell-button from the top in the dark hallway five times, an old signal agreed upon with Marya. 'Anybody rings three,' she had said. 'I shall know it it's you, *gelubchik!*'

It seemed a Devonian age before the door clicked its bit of disembodied Morse code back. It seemed gay and quick to Pyotr, as if Marya were glad he was there, although it was very late.

That last flight was done slowly. Marya stood in the door at the end of the hall, in a clinging black velvet gown, long, and simple. In her hair a beautiful Spanish comb of ebony inlaid in silver, wide, high, magnificent.

"Pyotr!" she said. "How nice — I've just come in from a party. You are just the right — why, little

sweedheart, what's the matter? Come in. Give me your hands. How cold you are! Here . . . drink this. Quick! "

The sharp, burning brandy brought Pyotr's voice back. He was in a deep soft chair. Marya sat on the arm of it, gazing down at him in deep concern.

" Girl. . . . Goddess . . ." he mumbled.

" I know," said Marya. " Yes. . . . I know."

" Do you? " asked Pyotr.

Somebody *knew!* Marya Mihailna knew.

For he believed her. All her haunting little kindnesses of years back came rushing to establish belief in something for him.

Marya stroked his head tenderly; poured him some more brandy; went over to the Louis Seize dressing-table in the corner of her restrained, charming room; brought back a huge square bottle.

" *Griss* " . . . it said, as the ground stopper came out. " *Griss. . . . Clink . . . clink.*"

She poured some cool fragrance into her hands and rubbed his forehead with it.

" Vi-lets? " he asked, feebly, dazed, inexplicably soothed.

" *Da . . . da. . . .* Little sweedheart. Yes. Violets. Smell good? "

" O . . . Marya," said Pyotr, and strange flat dry sobs choked his throat and battered his chest from inside.

Marya wisely turned away and waited until they were over.

" Pyotr darling," she said, with compassion, " do you remember one day at Mutke's . . . when you

were just a little boy still . . . do you remember his saying: 'It hits us like the first feeling we have as children . . . that the sky is blue . . . and endless . . . but the moon seems tangible . . . we could put it into our pocket if we could find a pole long enough to knock it down. . . . That one person we love too much is really the symbol of all the people we could love . . . and, alas, has some haunting charm to us of every one of them. . . . Would you stop up a river that waters a wide and beautiful valley . . . at its crystal source in the hills? Think of all the flowers that could bloom . . . violets, darling . . . all the trees that could launch their seedlings on that river, to journey to other places towards the Sea. . . . Would you stop them being trees to make ships and violins and little houses for people to be happy in — Houses of Music, Pyotr! — would you, my dear lovely child — *my* child! — send the crystal spring back into the earth before it could flow down into the valley and be warmed by the sun? . . .

Do you expect from any one soul the answer to all of your riddle, my dear. . . ."

"Yes. . . . I remember," said Pyotr.

"You have found that the sky is blue, darling. . . .

"Now look at me," she added. "Tonight what I know I will give you. It is all I have to help with."

Pyotr gazed at her, as she stood before him, straight and tall . . . another caryatid, bearing a magnificent symbol of proud race . . . a Spanish comb of ebony and silver for her flowered capital. . . .

It was like many music scores blended into one complex palimpsest, he thought . . . not of pain, nor resignation, but gorgeously. Happily.

"Am I beautiful?" she asked, as simply as a child, with neither vanity nor shyness.

"Gloriously," said Pyotr.

"Do you know why?" she asked. "I will tell you. Mutke taught me how to be. Listen:

"I loved my father. He was a scholar, in our little town in Russia. He was very kind to me. Very affectionate. He called me pretty names. He always brought me little gifts when he went out for a walk. He was tall. When I was eighteen I love a man . . . here. Too much. He is very cruel. He leave me. He did not marry me. . . . They took away my child. . . .

"I find your father. I put him in both these places, to feel better. I mek' you my child that I lost . . . my little sweedheart. He would have been dark and thin and tall and kind like you, Pyotr. . . .

"You used to buy me chocolate ice-cream out of the boot. Remember? And once you brought me a little red lacquer box. I have it still. . . .

"I mek' clothe' for all those little Nischkas firs' to mek' your father happy. Nischka was something to him he never had in his life. . . .

"But I mek' these clothe' for *me,* since I cannot sing like Nischka . . . to *pretend,* Pyotr, I am somebody.

"I am Me.

"But always I go upstairs and cry over two glove, a ring, a cigar-ban' . . . all that that man give to me . . . and take everything.

"I love him too much. I cannot give him up, in my head. I stop the river . . . in the cold mountains, where it is a little stream, just as Mutke said that day. I do not let it run down and get warm in the sun and mek' flowers bloom . . . violets, Pyotr darling!

"Then I see Mutke in your father's house, and I love him. . . . Mikael! I think he mek' be that other man. I am wrong! Mutke tell me how wrong. No man can do that . . . mek' be another man. No woman, either. . . .

"Now, I know.

"Pyotr . . . when Mikael comes back in two weeks . . . we are to be married! For I have learned to love him for himself. . . . Do you understand? Pleas' be happy for us . . . now . . . even tonight . . . when you are most hurt. I would have told you when you were here two days ago . . . but could not. It was mine. . . . I had to keep it to me a little. I was going to send you a wireless on your ship. . . ."

"I am glad," said Pyotr. "Very glad."

And he jumped up and took Marya's hands and kissed them.

"Now kiss *me!*" said Marya, softly.

Some instinct told her that the touch of her lips would heal Pyotr more than any other thing in the world, pain him as it might, also. 'Woman has hurt me! Give me woman!' is the inarticulate cry of man. "Not to be hurt more . . . but to be reassured."

"Are you sure that your girl-goddess is not someone else you could not have, Pyotr?" Marya went

on, searchingly, her hands on his shoulders, gazing into his eyes with a profound, a more than maternal, tenderness. "Think. . . . Some woman you worshipped when you were a child? Women are not goddesses, darling. They are women. Are you sure you love her for herself? . . . Or for what she looks like . . . has fragrance like . . . sounds in her voice like. . . . Somebody?"

Pyotr wavered on his feet, and Marya's firm hands on his shoulders steadied him.

"You . . . ?" he suggested.

"*Niet*, little sweedheart. *Niet*, I was your Mother. I was your sister. I was your frien', always. No, you never worship *me!*"

"I do now, then!" said Pyotr, almost smiling.

"It is someone else . . ." she repeated. "Some beautiful lady at the Settlement House."

"Miss Parrish!" exclaimed Pyotr.

Marya inclined her head gravely, kindly.

"She give you chance to mek' music . . . to learn to draw. . . . She is gran' lady, very tall. She is Lady Bountiful — she is *Princess* to you!" Marya finished, shrewdly.

Pyotr saw past Marya's searching eyes, that he had always thought of as India ink with flecks of gold in it . . . ink inside magical little oval bottles, with high-lights intriguing you, promising you the drawings you could make. He saw a Chinese shrine of black lacquer, with open doors, an unearthly tarnished red inside, to extol the gilded god who reposed there . . . on the wall a Hokusai of a man rowing a fabulous boat in a decorative Sea . . . a blue-green bronze Diana who was taking flight from the top

of a Chinese Chippendale cabinet . . . as red as an African geranium . . . as red as a flamingo. . . . A huge Persian vase filled with sweet pease cloyed the air like a church. . . . In a high Florentine chair sat a lady . . . in black velvet and green ear-rings . . . a lovely, august woman with quiet grey eyes . . . very remote . . . one could never touch her. . . .

"Yes . . ." said he, at last.

"Yes, Marya Mihailna."

Pyotr no longer felt the leaden shoes of a diver weighing him down to the floor.

"Marya . . . I love you," he said, simply.

"And I love you," said she. "*Ya lubleu tebia.* You must go home now. Sleep. You are sailing in the morning. Salt wind will help . . . Mutke's telegram today . . . sends you his blessing. We will come to see you in Vienna next year . . . if we can."

She crossed to the dressing-table and took from her bag a telegram and tore part of it carefully, and gave it to Pyotr.

> "— PYOTR MY BLESSING UPON FARING TO THRACE."

"And *I* give you this," she said. "A talisman, Pyotr!"

She took a black and white and silver cameo ring from her finger and gave it to him, with a curtsy.

"Wear it for love, little sweedheart," she whispered. "It is Aphrodite . . . not Diana.

Diana always runs away . . . hunting somebody else! "

. . . . . .

"Yes, Sir! It *is* a grand morning! " said the policeman at the corner cheerfully, to Pyotr.

For Pyotr had just said that to him. . . .

Chapter XXI

SEA-GULLS ALWAYS SING OF OTHER SHIPS . . .
OTHER VOYAGES . . . OTHER SEAS . . .

CHAPTER XXI

And on that sparkling late summer morning Ivan and Pyotr sailed for Le Havre, with hundreds of sea-gulls pursuing the ship like harpies. . . .

Pyotr, standing astern, watched the minarets of Manhattan become semicolons and exclamation points on the horizon, with a feeling of escape, of reclamation, of renascence. . . . He had been born at Sea. This was rebirth. An impalpable, but secure wall of severance from his youth rose up in the haze. He had an odd feeling that the diminishing mirage there beyond the voluble, shining, gull-peopled wake of the boat had never existed.

He had inveigled Ivan into the smoking-room and ordered a brandy and soda for him, and after that, another one. For Pyotr wanted to be alone a little while.

"I'll be back to drink the second one with you, my Father," he had promised, gaily.

"You are a good boy, Petrouchka! " the old man murmured, happily.

Pyotr committed to the Sea, standing there, at one with the deep-intervalled rhythm of a ship that has settled down to her gait, taking into his tired nerves the soothing monotony of measured motion. . . .

Nothing in New York will ever be the same again, he reflected, with both anguish and relief. The factory . . . Dovrée . . . Marya, who would soon be married. . . . Music to be written in the next two years . . . and maybe presented when he came back. . . . O, yes, Nischka had said to bring her that Symphony in Paris one day! A long time ago, when he was very young, she had said that. Symphony! . . . Well. . . . But it would be a Rhapsody, though!

Pyotr took from his pocket two letters, impersonal, aloof, hardly more than casual notes, but all that he had, tangibly, of Dovrée. He did not open them. He had tied to them a bit of lead that he had found in the street, crushed by many wheels.

He dropped them overboard.

One of the rapacious gulls swooped for the pale blue packet as it touched the water. But the lead was heavy. The letters were gone.

"Too late, old man!" said Pyotr aloud. "No food there for you. None for me, either," he added, and turned quickly to go back to the smoking-room to find Ivan and a brandy and soda. . . .

Chapter XXII

THE ABDUCTION OF THE COBBLER AND THE FIFTH SON

CHAPTER XXII

A YEAR had gone by and Alexey, irritably running through his morning mail, found a cable:

> WHERE IS MY MAESTRO HE NEVER MADE THESE SHOES THE CAT BROUGHT IN
>
> NISCHKA

With something of a war-time oath out of the trenches, Alexey crumpled the yellow sheet and flung it across the room to Nicolai who was going over some invoices from Sergey in strange places:

> Two bales old brocades from Benares . . .
> Two bales cut velvet hangings and chasubles from Venice. . . .
> Five boxes old tooled leather book-bindings from Florence and Seville.

"Who the hell sent that woman any more shoes?" asked Alexey, sternly.

"Why, I did," said Nicolai, mildly. "Father asked me before he left to be sure and make them for her just the same. She doesn't like them, evidently," Nicolai laughed without resentment. "I can't make 'em, you know, like the old man."

Alexey strode up and down the room, frowning. "Yeah," he observed, "none of our designers can touch it off the way Father did. It's about time he came back. I'll send him a cable."

Nicolai smiled good-humouredly and sent Nischka this answer:

YOUR MAESTRO IS AT SEVEN STEUER-STRASSE VIENNA THE CAT DID THE BEST HE COULD

Alexey's cable to Vienna was hardly less than desperate:

YOUVE HAD A YEAR CANT YOU AND PYOTR COME HOME NEED YOU BOTH FOR NEW STYLES LOSING GROUND COME IMMEDIATELY IF POSSIBLE CABLING YOU FIFTEEN HUNDRED DOLLARS EXPENSES AFFECTIONATELY

ALEXEY

Two days later Alexey's morning cables included a personal one from Nischka:

HAVE ABDUCTED FATHER SON AND HOLY GHOST THE COBBLER AND THE FIFTH SON AND I HAVE GONE ON A PICNIC A TRAPEZA

NISCHKA

And his own cable to Ivan was reported, returning voucher for fifteen hundred dollars, "Unable to deliver. Advise."

Nicolai chuckled when shown those disturbing

documents, for he had had a personal cable from Nischka also:

VIENNA AUGUST 13 19—
YOURE A DARLING I CAME HERE FROM BUDAPEST TO GET THE MAESTRO TO MAKE ME SOME SHOES I GO BAREFOOT BUT NOT PENITENT THEY ARE BOTH IN NEED OF A TRUE HOLIDAY AND I AM TAKING THEM TO MY VILLA IN CAPRI LOVE AND KISSES
NISCHKA

And this cable Nicolai tore into confetti and watched them, a hectic multitude, flickering down upon crowded Fifth Avenue under the office window. He revealed of it to Alexey, who had lost all self-control and was engaged in ransacking his memory for adequate curses, only the whereabouts of Nischka and their abducted father and brother.

Alexey took two drinks and dictated a cable, which Nicolai censored out of existence, substituting a more tempered one written by himself:

MAESTRO SADLY NEEDED FOR BUSINESS REASONS PLEASE URGE HIM TO COME BACK IN PYOTRS CARE

Response was as immediate as the languid resources of Capri permitted; six days, in fact:

KEEPING ALL LETTERS AND CABLES FROM YOUR CLANSMEN FOR ONCE IN THIS UGLY WORLD THREE ARTISTS ARE HAVING A HOLIDAY YOUR FATHER SITS IN THE SUN AND I TALK OF OLD AND

MELLOW THINGS TO HIM AND WITH PYOTR YOUR BROTHER OF YOUNG AND VIVID THINGS IF THEY NEED MONEY I HAVE IT DEVOTEDLY

N

"That settles it," said Alexey. "I'll have to go and settle all this. Money indeed, when she owes us seven or eight thousand dollars. I can pick up Sergey in Paris anyway and fix up that scheme with Langueduc. Besides . . . Gavril, you know . . . got to go to the hospital next month . . . they ought to be here . . . see him once more . . . in case. . . ."

"I think so, too," said Nicolai, soberly.

Chapter XXIII

AFRICAN MARBLE OUT OF AN OLD QUARRY

CHAPTER XXIII

THE day passed like a dream. First the early train in the hideous station in Rome, the journey over that old Campagna, Nischka's stories of old places and days, while Ivan dozed in the corner. They had had the compartment to themselves. Then Naples, filthier than Orchard Street in the old days, then a boat with Nischka's and their bags and themselves and Tukkim in it, followed by another containing her trunks, then the magical Isle of Capri, first a mirage, then a precipitous reality, the hubbub and barter of the old women at the quay . . . then the Villa dei Innocenti, high up on the saddle of the Island, with a steep garden slipping down the slope like a box of toy fountains and steps spilled out and little cypress trees.

The rusty iron gate rang like a bell as Nischka closed it. It was shortly before sunset, and a spatter of rain heralded them. Nischka's servants, Giovanni and Gemma, had come with torches of olive wood to the ringing of the bell.

Rusty lay the chain for the dog of the Innocenti; swallows had built their nests in the foliage of the old capitals of the loggia; and the Ariadne-nets of the busy Arachnidas were spread everywhere. Green moss marked the crevices between the paving-stones,

and an old Pompeian garden-god stood in a topiary niche of the hedge.

It had all been adequate, homely, welcoming . . . this decayed but lovely villa, set like a pale rose jewel in the helmet of an early Goth, here on the hilltop. Nischka's hospitality, invoked by a letter to Gemma, extended all about them. The incredibly long linen towels, with blue Byzantine architecture embroidered at the ends; the smell of thyme and lavender in the spacious room, the carafe of wine and tray of little cakes — all soothed Ivan and Pyotr as of another world. They had never been in Italy.

"This is a holiday;" Nischka had said at the gate, "there is no hurry here. Dinner is always at eight, if not at nine. . . . Anything is when you please. — Weary, Maestro?"

"Not too much," said the old man, happily.

For this island was truly fairyland to him, as it has been to many another voyager from Naples. Even to Tiberius, whose phantom villa in the water has been the Fata Morgana of true believers for centuries. Some say a buried city. . . .

They walked through the tangled garden, which boasted two quince japonica trees, rare in Capri, planted there by some former inhabitant, past the eight-sided pool out of which rose a fountain with three basins and a figure of Fortuna pouring water out of a cornucopia into the topmost basin, thence to drip brokenly into the lower ones . . . a sort of song that Pyotr was long to remember, and to weave into the rhapsody that he was writing in Vienna when Nischka climbed their stairs that day to tear them away from work to this reckless holiday.

And Ivan and Pyotr, shown to a suite of rooms on the second floor, found wide windows, somewhat Moorish, open to a world of water and stars (for the rain had gustily gone towards Naples to chill the Neapolitans and drive them indoors), and wine and little *pasticcerie* to nibble.

And dinner was held in a wide, high vaulted room with a scented wind straying through it — a wind smelling of bay and salt — with Nischka in the golden gown she wore in *Monna Vanna,* and Ivan in a huge ducal chair from Venice at the head of the old marble Pompeian table spread with three thicknesses of old plum-colored velvet; for Nischka loved to lean on tables, and even mellow Numidian marble is cold, delved as it is out of warm African latitudes.

It was a lingering, leisurely, Italian dinner in which fresh things of the earth were urbanely mingled with maturer things of the cellar, even as all life in Italy is a blending of old Etruscan salt with the fresh feeling for the things of today. To the true lover of the peninsula it is sheer Pagan richness to dine on the best food in the world out of nicked Majolica platters upon a cloth that the enduring of time rather than the corrupting moth has rendered pleasantly threadbare even as the fabric of Italy's fields and the façades of her palaces.

Pyotr fell asleep in his high vaulted room, dreaming that he was embarked in an Ether-ship among more stars than he had ever seen. . . . The plaint of the fountain in the garden became the drowsy flute sound that lingers through Debussy's *En Bateau.* . . .

Ivan, comforted with brandy, fell asleep in his

chair in the *salon,* his feet wrapped in an old chasuble by Nischka, and his skullcap bestowed upon his head by Pyotr.

He was too exhausted, they felt, to be disturbed.

Nischka dreamed for a while by the two-arched Byzantine window of her room, for it was always difficult for her to sleep until she had claimed her new surroundings to herself, even as she always had to sing once in each stage set of the opera in which she was to appear in order to be at home in it. . . .

This truly was a holiday of three vagabonds from an ordered world.

Chapter XXIV

IT IS EASY TO CLIMB AN OLD GRAPE-VINE . . . IF THERE IS A BALCONY AT THE TOP OF IT

CHAPTER XXIV

It was three evenings later and Pyotr had brought his violin into the garden after dinner and walked up and down on the terrace playing absently, while Nischka sat pensive in a long wicker chair smoking endless cigarettes and feeding pine-nuts to Tukkim who was in a bad humour. His day had been ruined by an ecounter with an invading macaw from Tangier.

The moon rose beyond Naples like a vast pewter mirror being presented by some gigantic djinn.

And Ivan, having smoked the magnificent meerschaum pipe with a figure of Ceres upon the bowl, that Nischka had bought for him in Vienna for a "running-away gift" as she had said . . . petrified sea-foam, she had explained to him — stood looking at them silently a long time with the gentle smile of a patriarch who finds the affairs of his tribe at peace, and went in to bed without a word.

For Ivan had found on the Magical Island a surcease, and sat in the sun, most of the day, and slept the long hours of the very old, who have learned the fine virtue of simple things.

"It was in September that the halcyon — the kingfisher — built her nest on the surface of blue Ægean water, it was so still," Nischka had re-

marked, dreamily, some little time before. And Pyotr had answered her with music.

And Pyotr strolled slowly up and down the paved terrace, as he had once done between the tables of the Golden Princess in Forty-ninth Street, lost in his violin, improvising, competing with the drowsy song of the fountain as he passed, remembering fragments of Chopin, Peter Cornelius, Debussy, Ravel. . . .

And Nischka leaned back in her wicker chair, smoking cigarettes, and pacifying Tukkim, who complained audibly of the cold. " Tukkim, you are a bore," she exclaimed. " This is not a hotel, and we're going to stay." And put him on the ground, clapped her hands and commanded: " Go and eat grapes! " The little creature, in a sort of velvet dressing gown and a black velvet cap with a red button, waddled down the path to the grapevine in the moonlight, an odd, pathetic figure; nimbly climbed, and began to throw grapes into the fountain — which Pyotr noticed, and was amused.

Finally he paused in front of her, and brought his barcarolle to a sobbing end.

She stretched up her hands.

" Pietro mio, you are like that sculptor in Egypt, who infringed upon the hieratic laws by carving some features too much like Isis. You have no right to say so much — with your music! " she exclaimed, almost like a hurt child.

" Give it to me," said she.

And she took the frail thing and laid it against her breast and rubbed her cheek on the scroll. Then she plucked the bass string almost timidly.

"How can it be?" she asked, softly.

"It is a woman," said Pyotr.

"True, but it has a soul; and women . . ."

"Do not need any," said Pyotr, dreamily.

Nischka turned her head quickly, like a startled bird.

"You know that much?" she asked.

"I don't know anything," said Pyotr, taking the other wicker chair, "except what this sky and this island, these stars and this garden . . . and you, tell me."

"Is that enough?" asked Nischka.

Pyotr did not answer.

"Pietro mio," said Nischka, "listen. Do you hear those swallows in their nests of seaweed and silk, in the capitals of the loggia, whispering to each other?"

"Yes, I hear them."

"What do they say?"

Pyotr did not answer.

"They say, 'Take a woman when she is yours,' my dear; they say, 'Do not listen and wait for words in this swift-flying existence; women's oaths are as fleeting as the water on which they are written to efface the image of themselves.'"

Pyotr, his chin in his hands, stared at the Bay.

Nischka rose, and put the violin under her arm.

"Do you see that little balcony, there beyond the last cypress?" she asked, as simply as a child.

Pyotr looked.

"Do you see that old vine whose fingers are caught in the masonry like the claspings of a Florentine book? That vine climbs up to bring me golden

grapes each morning like cool clusters of antique poems. . . . It climbs there . . . to my balcony . . . at night to bring me purple honey, still warm with the sun . . . like memory."

Pyotr was silent.

Nischka walked past him, slowly, her stiff old brocade gown making sounds like the wind in poplar trees, her heels making slow little beats on the paving, as if a gay ghost knocked upon an old and familiar door . . . courteously . . . invitingly.

At the loggia, ten feet away, she turned.

"Tonight, I do not want grapes . . . nor memories," she said, very softly.

And she was gone.

The creak of the wicker chair she had left startled Pyotr. It was as if the chair urged him, too, to find movement for his clenched hands, that had nearly snapped the violin bow in them. She had taken it, his alter ego — his golden Egeria of pine-wood, made from the Eighteenth Century shingles of that old roof in Prague (so Mutke had told him, knowing violin-makers' history, as few do) — she had gone! She had said — What *did* she say like some echo out of nowhere he had ever been? His heart pounded violently; somewhere in his thorax he felt it pulse, like the engine of a ship. He got up, and the sky reeled. He stood there, trembling, his feet rooted to the pavement.

A sharp breaking sound steadied the sky. He looked down at his hands. It *was* broken, the violin bow; the two pieces forlornly held together by horse-hair.

It could be mended, he thought, unimportantly.

An hour ago, that bow meant to him the subtle key to melody. Now . . . it did not matter.

But the sharp sound of the fracture had broken down something in Pyotr, some carefully fabricated reticence, some jealously guarded treasure-feeling that he had little by little cherished into a silver case, like the hearts of the French Kings at St. Denis, all those nights he had walked the crowded aisles of the Golden Princess and poured out his soul through his violin to the girl who always sat alone and burned her blue eyes into his. . . .

Something had snapped the night she had told him she loved someone else who did not love her. And that she came to listen to him, to eke out the dry bread of her feast of pain.

And now — he loved someone else, who loved him. That was what the sleepy swallows were saying, under the eaves of dusk; that was what the fountain was saying, lullingly.

The bow dropped from his hands forgotten. He came to where the roots of that old vine sprang up out of worn paving, as gnarled and tough as a tree.

'It is quite easy to climb a vine twenty feet to a balcony!' thought Pyotr, with some surprise.

And the heavy clusters of grapes that he dislodged fell, noiselessly and were crushed on the white marble below.

The proper sacrifices had been made to Love. . . .

Chapter XXV

"I love"

CHAPTER XXV

THE swallows' late morning voices complaining of their architecture, their progeny, their plans for the day, stirred Pyotr into consciousness.

Idly he gazed up at the coffered wooden ceiling of blue and gold, with its inset brightly coloured terra cotta reliefs. All the old tales seemed to be depicted there: Venus sending Psyche to do the three tasks; Pluto carrying a by no means struggling Proserpine into a cavern; Paris making the decision of the apple, which however had fallen from his hand long ago. There was no apple there; Leda . . . Mercury . . . even an Etruscan Janus, conversing with two nymphs — all depicted amiably, and with Pagan simplicity and frankness.

His eyes wandered to the two-arched Byzantine window, where the summer breeze *tutoyered* the crushed plum velvet curtains — delicious thee-thowing — and jingled the metallic fringe — chainmail of bygone Saracens — pleasantly.

Vibrant, whispered words came back to him, as he looked through the window at the blue splendour of water and sky.

'Down there . . . my dear . . . is Africa . . . where they are very civilized about love . . . those proud Moroccan folk provide for a young son . . .

at the first troubled age, a lovely slave-woman, mature . . . kind . . . to bridge the gulf between mother love and passion . . . to conduct him through the corridors of mystery . . . to impart the ancient secrets . . . retell the new legend . . . you must regard me as that slave . . . some day you will find your golden-haired Princess Lointaine . . . she will be grateful to you . . . she will not hate unknown me. . . . And I, darling lover . . . do not ever think of me in other places . . . except as a simple Priestess of Isis. . . . I have lived too long to say more than " I love," demanding nothing. . . . No one can ever say more . . . to be " in love " is to lose that simplicity. . . . To love is always to love. . . . So shy a soul as yourself must have simplicity . . . you must be loved in order to write your music. . . . Use it, my dear . . . and never feel ashamed . . . you will give it all back through your violin. . . .'

Pyotr turned, half fearfully, on his elbow.

The lovely sleeping woman there, one arm above her head, with open fingers as if holding that phantom apple of Paris . . . lightly, unpossessively . . . playfully . . . had a smile on her face, as of contentment.

All the masks of the theatre had been laid by, leaving the shy Irish face without defences.

" Without her green eyes," Pyotr thought, marvelling at the revealments of a sleeping face never seen at any other time, " she is only a child! "

And he felt curiously encouraged, certified . . . wise . . . and alive with the Dionysian knowledge that had just now frightened his throat.

A stealthy, rhythmic sound drew his eyes towards the window. He looked, and became convulsed with laughter. And Nischka's bubbling golden mirth, like wine poured from an alabaster jug, echoed his, as she awoke, and looked.

For they saw Tukkim, armed with the broken violin bow and its flail of horse-hair, whacking energetically and with simian gravity at a sun-drunken bumblebee, who drowsed like a black and gold device on the old red stamped leather Spanish chair by the window. . . .

Chapter XXVI

THE STABILITY OF THE FLOATING ISLAND OF LAPUTA

CHAPTER XXVI

NISCHKA was dressed in a sweeping garment of cloth of gold, with a girdle made of old coins. She had washed her opulent red hair that morning, and dried it in the sun. It streamed over her face and shoulders, a glittering weeping willow of molten copper, to which Nischka had added a coronal of bay leaves and roses twisted about two embroidery hoops. She wore a mask against the September sun, a Pompeian theatre mask of parchment that had survived three lava burials.

It had been given her by an archaeologist the summer before, out of his store of treasures, in tribute to her speaking some lines out of Antigone in the theatre there. It was the mask made to depict grief for the Pompeian wearer, an emotion so ironic for Nischka that morning that she assumed it along with the rest of her quaintly assorted properties.

For Nischka although far from thrifty, deeply loved certain things in her wardrobe trunk of the opera, and had spent a most feminine morning (having sent Pyotr away for the day, to do so) shaking out clothes, sunning them on balconies, playing every part she had ever played, and singing fragments of each.

Deeper than these haphazard but definite feminine purposes of a bright seductive day on an island

that is steeped in the blue of the Mediterranean, and steeped in the blue of the sky — somewhat like Swift's island of Laputa, from which embassies could be sent down to earth . . . but " never the Queen," reflected Nischka, who knew her Gulliver very well — she had a fabulous emprise for the day.

" The stability of the state of Laputa demands that the Queen stay in the air! " she had mocked, while unfolding the blue robe of Guinevere. . . .

Her deeper purpose in sending Pyotr away that morning had been threefold, as all her mingled theatre, and love, and love of life mind (*divisa est,* like Gaul) had always been. She was fearful for Pyotr and wanted to think. She was not only clearing her wardrobe trunk of vestments, but her mind as well. She had been long aware (for Nischka knew all about herself) that her voice, first a lyric Dublin voice, that had charmed many a high-paneled room with wicked Elizabethan songs and had charmed her prince, had been ruined in the making of an opera singer. Those stout gentlemen in Florence — *bel canto;* those thin gentlemen with beautifully carved bald heads like thoughtful beetles, in Paris, had done things to her voice to run it through their arias and the more difficult contortions of Massenet and Charpentier. And Nischka knew it.

For years she had longed to go away somewhere; to be joyously happy with a lover; to recapture, by singing out of doors, that rare country voice she had had.

This had seemed the day to begin. She had dispatched Pyotr. Ivan, she knew, would sleep until

noon and whatever she did would charm him in any case.

Moreover, there lurked in Nischka's heart a shy, and close province, shut up there since she was seventeen. She wanted to charm Pyotr, a young and sensitive boy, such as in those old Dublin days had been denied her. Her prince had been all that was adorable, but he had not been young.

" Besides " — her swift mind ran on, as she tried several of Marlowe's old Romaunts of Roses, and two of Shakespeare's Sonnets set to music by a Seventeenth Centuryman, and some of Spenser by the same fine hand. " Pyotr wants youth . . ." she reflected. " I am too much his George Sand. If . . . I can only give it to him in my voice. . . ."

So conjectured Nischka in her garden.

Chapter XXVII

ONE CANNOT BE SAID TO HAVE ARRIVED IF ONE HAS ONLY REACHED A LOCKED GATE

CHAPTER XXVII

ALEXEY caught the rusty trefoil ring and pulled at the rusty chain hanging by the battered iron gate, and stood wonderingly staring in at the garden. Somewhere in the rose-pink villa a faint bell jangled. The two old women who had carried his heavy bags and his trunk on their heads up the steep street from the funicular (despite his protests) stood waiting to see if he got in, stood waiting to see what would happen, as old women do the world over. For old women have little else to do.

Alexey had said the word "Capri" to the two brigands at the ship's ladder, and he was accustomed to commanding. He had not been a Captain in the war for nothing. Here he was, with the departure of another ship for Genoa later in the day fixed in his mind as the limit of a stay in Italy. He had come to take Ivan and Pyotr home, and — but why did no one come? He pulled at the rusty ring once more, impatiently. But no bell answered him. He had broken some one of the ropes or wires or whatever Italian door-bells have to sustain communication betwixt street and kitchen. No one came.

"Ecco, Signore," said one of the old women. *"E troppo a buon ora. Commanda Hotel?"*

No, Alexey didn't want any hotel. He was only

staying an hour or so. That was his way. It usually worked, to get what he wanted.

As he waited, the small marble tablet in the wall by the gate mocked him.

" Villa dei Innocenti," he spelled it out, pondering.

The old woman shook her head sympathetically and said, as she and her accomplice moved away, *" Questa sera, Signore. Si dormi . . . in casa.* They are asleep in there."

The street was very narrow, and suddenly a creaking sound and much more Italian speech announced the advent of a cart with a donkey coming around the turn. The donkey seemed to be named Biancattina, being quite black. Alexey perceived that the trunk and his two bags would have to be moved, and set about standing them upright in the depth of the wall embrasure of the gateway. The charioteer smiled and uttered: *" Buon' giorno, Signore. La porta e chiusa? "*

He had a load of firewood. Alexey had smatterings of many languages. His agency in Rome and the deciphering of letters therefrom made him understand Italian a little.

" See here," said Alexey, indicating his baggage. " I've got to get in here." He dangled the limp iron chain, pantomimed, " Broken "; showed his watch to the man, " Hurry "; jingled some coins. For he had gathered that there was another gate, farther on; that the firewood was going into the villa — and had decided that he would go with it. Alexey's tactics were generally effective. The man climbed down, gave his *angela bianc'* to Alexey to hold, and hoisted first the trunk. Biancattina quite understood that

discipline had been relaxed, and made a joyous bray, reverberating in the narrow street like the calliope of a circus, and started off, dragging Alexey with her.

"Whoa!" ejaculated Alexey feebly, caught in the gate recess by the wheel. His trunk, precariously perched on the wood fell off, so did the wood.

But a Caprian donkey can have only one idea at a time; hence the lengthy sway of the Roman Empire, for Empires move on four feet — the remark of an old Carthaginian general, a remark later amended by Napoleon to "an army moves on its stomach" — hence the downfall of Napoleon, some think.

But the jennets of the Crusaders took them to Jerusalem without doubt, or their palfreys, and certainly Hannibal recognized the single-minded character of his jennet too late to amend it by further crossbreeding.

The resulting hubbub was pierced by laughter, not silvery, but contralto, not mocking, but amused, whole-hearted, feminine. It was the laughter of Lucia di Lammermoor, tempered by morning, by a theatrical necessity that was not of the theatre.

For it was Nischka who laughed. She was just inside the iron gates, with a huge clumsy pair of iron garden shears such as the Erinyes are sometimes equipped with in old engravings.

For Nischka had been playing at La Belle Dame Sans Merci all morning, and at the same time playing at gardening with the shears of the Erinyes.

And Nischka *was* all the Erinyes, Alecto and Tisiphone and Megæra in one, being Irish!

She had been amusing herself snipping cobwebs in her garden. She smiled frankly at Alexey. It was working out so well, this morning play of hers. She had a locked gate to tease her victim through; she had shears for his discomfiture; her loose, purple seaweed sandals felt pleasantly cool on her feet — for she had been wading in the eight-sided pool on the terrace of the Innocenti — first, long ago, a Roman villa of one of Tiberius' satellites, later the site of a medieval *castello* and now, the villa of Nischka.

This must be that Nischka for whom his father had done so much labour, who never answered a letter or paid a bill; and yet he didn't know. For an American business man, who has had no breakfast to speak of, to be confronted with shears and a Pompeian mask, is apt to be a trifle disconcerting.

Alexey glowered at her. Biancattina's progress had been checked by one of his bags, impeding the cart wheel. The driver was exhorting him: "*Pazienza, Signore — subito — subito.*" And Biancattina brayed again. Alexey's watch — it had all happened so quickly — dangled by its golden chain. The crystal, Nischka noted with glee, was broken. Alexey had lost his hat.

He was standing on it in fact.

Nischka stopped laughing. She was very sober.

"You hurry too much, my friend," said she. "If you would enter this enchanted garden, leave hurry behind you — Giovanni!" to the struggling driver, "*Fermate!*"

"Are you Madame Nischka?" asked Alexey stiffly. He could not ask otherwise, hemmed in by

gate, wheel, firewood, baggage and mocking womankind.

But La Belle Dame had very little Merci — was for the moment totally without it, in fact.

Her eyes narrowed somewhat.

"She lives here sometimes," she said cryptically. "Who shall I tell her is waiting at her gate?" This in her best manner, quite out of place.

For Nischka played all her parts, out-of-theatre. She *was* the theatre, her most venomous critic had said. He was her most venomous admirer, also. Nischka henceforward assured the attitude of the Frenchwoman: "I am the people, *maintenant.*"

"I rang twice," said Alexey, "and the bell —"

"*O, la, la!*" exclaimed Nischka. "That bell — it must be fixed — some day. But did Madame expect you?"

"Well, no," said Alexey, "she didn't; but I came to get my father." He produced his card.

"Ah—h," said Nischka, "you are the son of the Maestro! I see."

Her antics changed. She snipped with her shears at an imaginary cobweb, two inches from Alexey's nose. "Pardon me, sir," she said, "the spiders, they are very bad this year — they keep the gate from opening — Giovanni!"

"*Si, Signora,*" said the brigand, from behind the cart.

"Take the strange *Signore* and all his baggage a long way around on the cart, Giovanni. . . . Show him the view. Tell him it is a long way to the other gate . . . and get me some charcoal, and two live

geese for dinner! Amuse the *Signore* for an hour," she added. All this is rapid Italian.

"*Si, si, Signora,*" said Giovanni, chuckling.

"Biancattina," he urged with an oath, adding some nebulous Caprian donkey words which, whatever they meant, she interpreted as "back up." And for a miracle did so.

"This gate is locked, sir," said Nischka, with a curtsy, "the key is lost. In your brother's pocket. Giovanni will take you to the carriage gate, *subito* — and I shall tell Madame Nischka that you are here. Your father the Maestro sleeps, I think. *Permettez-moi* — your hat." She reached for it through the gate. "I will have it brushed by the time you get there — "

"And my brother? " interrupted Alexey rudely.

"Ah — h, the young man — he went away," said Nischka, mockingly, "to walk in the meads with a fairy child, sir. All in good time he will return. *Buon' viaggio* to you. *A rivederci.*"

And Nischka sauntered away, palpably lingering, snipping a leaf, a cobweb — losing the crown and picking it up, ignoring her victim struggling in his net of Circumstance — playing Ariadne — making a splendid exit.

For she had detected the angry admiration in Alexey's eyes; she had startled a business man into being human. Alexey was very handsome, despite that dangling watch-chain — he could be induced to give it up in time — it would make a good chain for Tukkim when he needed to be chained up for megrims.

He often did.

Ah, yes, Alexey would do very well; *he* was one of the Innocenti in this world, also. She straightened up and studied the card insolently, knowing he was looking, knowing that it would take some time for Giovanni to get Biancattina headed the other way, after turning her around in the narrow street.

ALEXEY MESTRAVVIK

PRESIDENT — MAESTRO, INCORPORATED.

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it read, imposingly.

As a final insult, Nischka paused at the turn of the path, took off one sandal, peered into it, standing on one foot, and pretending terror, gathered up her early Greek drapery, and ran, leaving the sandal there to mock him. For Nischka had beautiful legs, and it was rarely that one had the opportunity to make an exit running.

For that sandal was one of the last that had been fabricated for her by Ivan before he left New York. She knew that Alexey would recognize it. Having turned the corner of the terrace, out of sight, Nischka made one more shriek (out of "La Tosca" this time) and sank exhausted with laughter on a bench. It had been a good morning.

Alexey uncomfortably mounted on the load of wood, holding on to his *bagaglio* traversed many steep roadways on his journey that morning to the *altra porta*.

For Giovanni drove him around and about; called

upon him to witness the view; bought two live geese, and gave them to Alexey to hold; left him many times with Biancattina to hold; held long consultations with several people in vehement Italian, mostly about the weather. And this, Alexey, hatless and very hungry (for he had only had coffee very early on the boat), dimly suspected, but was helpless in the matter. From a hilltop he saw his steamer, the *Augustus,* that he had expected to catch with Ivan and Pyotr for Genoa smoking like Vesuvius.

For Giovanni interpreted Nischka's instructions as to an hour's *viaggio* liberally, and with ready humor elongated the journey to his heart's content — even stopping at his own house on the way, for *pranzo,* after which he fed Biancattina and resumed the road.

And to all Alexey's questions he would answer, cheerfully, " *Subito, Signore, subito. La Villa Innocenti e molto, molto grandissima!* " With a sweep of his donkey stick to incorporate the whole island.

Alexey thought of telephoning, but — !

But eventually (*subito*) they arrived at the heavy wooden gate of Villa dei Innocenti, around the corner of the walled road from where they started and Alexey's stiff legs took him into the kitchen entrance, conducted by Gemma, and up the usual stone stairs, and winding passages, past the stone kitchen table spread with fresh green things, and a most appetizing smell; and by a demure maid he was led, finally, into a resplendent room, its three arches framing the great blue world and his steamer vanishing on the horizon.

Chapter XXVIII

"I HAVE RUN TOO LONG UPON THE WIND WITHOUT A HOLIDAY"

CHAPTER XXVIII

He turned to see her standing there, dressed in the gown of another century.

Alexey had been an officer in the army, had encountered people high and low, in big business about the world. Alexey prided himself on his ability to meet people. But all this had given him no preparation for Nischka, her red hair piled into a bewildering castle of copper, her taffeta gown of the First Empire, revealing a woman so comely, so insouciant, so reticent, so sumptuous, and yet so brazen, that Alexey quailed.

But it was somehow perfectly clear to him that he had met his match; it was evident that the lady did not intend to shake hands with him. And it was still more evident that whatever game they played he would be the loser.

It was in fact quite clear to him that he had already been appraised, assessed, beaten.

He more than suspected that this formidable Lorelei out of the French Empire had been no other than the pert maid who had taunted him so ably at the gate of the villa an hour and a half ago. Beautiful women always cast a potent spell upon Alexey. He felt now somewhat grateful to the others for his apprenticeship, for Alexey realized that all experi-

ence is but a prelude, a preface, and a warning to experience. Weary as he was, hot, dusty, outraged, poisoned with anger, a vast succession of meaningless images slipped away from his eyes, leaving clear as a cameo, as untarnished as rain-splashed marble, the abundant and compelling and arresting figure who faced him down the long room at fifteen paces.

If a similar phenomenon had happened to Nischka, her well-trained face and her excellent make-up betrayed little of it. Her hands, well-trained also, were utterly reticent. Alexey's sharp eye wandered to her feet, but no, not even by the movement of a toe did she betray anything of what Alexey felt was swinging the lofty, stately room through space. The ten thousand masks of a great actress cannot conceivably extend to the outermost limits of her aura.

It was Alexey who spoke first.

"You are Madame Nischka?" said he, quietly.

She inclined her head. She even seemed to bow, and Alexey's quick ear heard the slight crackle of paper . . . but perhaps it was only the taffeta.

"I have come to see my father," he went on, advancing two steps.

"Your father is sleeping," said Nischka. "He is an old man. He always has his siesta."

Her tone was so gentle that Alexey could scarcely credit his ears. "But I have come to take him home. Why do you not wish me to see him?"

It was Nischka who advanced two steps now. The something that hung quivering in the vast Italian room seemed gradually to be drawing them reluctantly towards each other.

"Signor Alexey," said she, weighing each word as if, with a golden spoon, some precious substance out of a porcelain jar, "why can you not see that there are other things in this life besides business?"

"I see that there are," said Alexey, and could have eaten his words.

"He is very tired," said Nischka. "He has lived a long time. He has made many shoes for you to run on the wind with. Are you not tired of running on the wind, my friend?"

"Yes, but. . . ."

"You will kill him," said Nischka, quietly. "Can you not spare him a little *dolce far niente,* a little time to sit in the sun, a little dream, a little sunset. He has made too many shoes."

"My brother, then," said Alexey, sharply. "Where is he?"

And between them quivered and eddied back and forth like a two-edged shuttle of sharp and shining steel, a look, naked, unashamed, perceiving and perceived, angry and without defense. And Alexey found it necessary to jingle something in his pocket.

"Signor Alexey," said the lady, "I, too, am tired. I have run too long and worn out too many pairs of shoes, dancing before the wind, without a holiday. Your little brother is also tired. He has taken his heart and made it into a violin for Orpheus to play to the wild beasts. He has lived too little and suffered too long; and I have lived too much, and suffered not quite enough. I have taken nothing from him, and I have given him whatever I could. The three of us came here to be happy a little while, to let the clock run down and the fire burn out; for here we

have the sun, and there are no wheels. I needed to sit in a corner of the garden with your poor old father and speak of grief with silence, and I needed to walk in the selfsame garden with the other one, and to sing to him of what is not altogether grief. Do you understand me? "

" Yes," said Alexey. " But we, my brothers and I, have not seen them for a year."

Nischka smiled a little sadly.

" I think they needed me," said she.

And Alexey found it of no help to him to jingle things in his pocket.

" Then you refuse," said he.

" Refuse? " said Nischka. " Refuse to let two weary souls go back to your weary New York from a place where they are happy? You speak in families and I in souls. Certainly I refuse."

Alexey's eyes flickered. " Then, perhaps," said he, and a queer cold feeling caught him in the throat. He reached into an inside pocket and Nischka watched him sardonically; for what he took out of that pocket was a folded paper, pale blue, ominous, belonging in no sense to the room nor to the occasion. And she knew very well what it was.

" Perhaps," said Alexey, " you won't mind, since it is the first opportunity I have had to ask you in person. You owe us the sum of seven thousand eight hundred and sixty-five dollars."

And he came stiffly towards her, holding out the paper to her. Nischka took it, and had Alexey been less angry, he might have seen that the green lights in her eyes jumped and snapped like a high tension wire broken in mid-air.

She took the paper and turned away.

When she faced him again Alexey was startled to hear words sung to him in the full and rich contralto that was Nischka's. French words. She did the entire scene for him, with contempt and a certain icy glee. And when she had finished, she drew the blue paper, crumpled into a rag, from her bodice and dropped it on the floor at his feet as if it were the heart of a puppet and she performing the play's inevitable gesture.

Centuries of the suffering of the artist spoke in her.

"You," said she, "are only one of a thousand Napoleons, and I am only a poor laundress of the theatre. I am Madame Sans-Gêne, the woman without birth, and I have made clean people's emotions for them for a thousand years. This is your pitiful laundry bill, my friend, and you shall pay me. For, if I like, I can drive patronage from your door. Where think you it came from, if not from Nischka? For whose sake have your fine dolls come to buy shoes, except because Nischka bought them? Who came to your shop fifteen years ago because your old father was a great artist? Who brought others to you?

"Signor Alexey, I am ashamed of you."

Alexey saw a chair not too far distant, and managed to get there. There was a constriction in the muscles of his neck, and his feet moved unwillingly.

That crumpled blue paper on the floor seemed to be the blue Mediterranean . . . between him and Nischka, seemed to be the blue Atlantic Ocean. He saw himself suddenly back in his sleek-car-

peted, sleek-upholstered office in New York, with a vast emptiness stretching from himself into space.

He saw himself mechanically dictating letters, giving orders, signing a check for two thousand alligator skins. All his life he had known that there was a moment beyond money, that money could not buy nor pay for when lost, and he had had the moment, and had lost it. . . .

For Alexey's soul had just been born, and all the thousand images not all carnal, but somehow ingrained with the lichen-like lines of carnality, rushed by him like a river in flood, bearing lost hectic leaves from abandoned forests of his memory; and he looked up through the first tears that had ever come to him over a woman, and he saw Nischka, as few people had ever seen her, with all her spiritual make-up off. For something had happened to Nischka, also.

Alexey struggled with a large, round paving stone in his mouth. The orators of Greece may indeed have learned to speak clearly with a pebble under their tongues, but Alexey made strange inarticulate sounds like an animal in distress.

It has been said that emotional articulation to a true woman is scarcely a matter of diction. The validity of what is uttered is sufficing to her. Perhaps she is the truer realist of the two, after all; perhaps her intelligence *is* the emotional intelligence of the artist, after all, and to her the artist is only an amateur in what she knows so very well without knowing that she knows it.

At any rate Alexey felt a singularly warm and

sensitive hand take hold of his wrist, and into his own hand was guided and insinuated the thin and cold and indefinably sharp-cut stem of an old crystal wineglass filled with good red wine.

Nischka, having won, could be generous.

Chapter XXIX

"IT WAS RECKONED, IN ANTIQUE TIMES, EXTREMELY DANGEROUS TO ENCOUNTER A DEMI-GOD AFTER SUNSET"

CHAPTER XXIX

PYOTR had ventured forth idly that forenoon for a walk at Nischka's request.

" But don't go too far away, *Pietro mio,*" she had said. " There is a little gift I want time to make for you today, a gay linnet. Take the key of the gate with you," she added, playfully, " so that no one can get in! "

And he had wandered the winding Roman road and, being beguiled by a branch nailed over the door of a *trattoria* signifying new wine, had lingered there over luncheon and the heady wine, bemused; idled until he began to make score-notes on the back of the wireless from his brother, handed him that morning. Alexey, he supposed, would be in Capri towards evening, though the wireless mandatorily stated:

ARRIVING CAPRI THURSDAY MUST BRING FATHER AND YOU HOME URGENT BUSINESS BE READY SAIL SAME DAY
ALEXEY

But the *dolce far niente* of Capri had stolen into Pyotr's blood, like the golden wine he was drinking, and Alexey's words, as he re-read them, were not as significant as the sound of the big blue fly that droned about his wineglass. And none of the old an-

tagonism towards Alexey visited him. America and American affairs seemed very far distant, and Pyotr's cup was very full of sunshine and the 'more than a lover, less than a friend' richness that Nischka had imparted to him.

"Lovers have to be a little less than friends!" she had explained gaily.

Pyotr sat at a table under a vine, in the garden of the *trattoria*. He drew score lines with the *padrone's* pencil along a curved Italian knife like a dirk. . . . They amused him . . . they were so wavy — He thought of them as Hokusai waves and his notes the sunshine flecks and little boats like dragon flies dancing there. His notes? The scrap of Nischka's song that he had heard as he left the garden — not to hear her — only to linger in the walled street a little, struck again with the magnificent view towards Vesuvius, where, he meditated, Thor, or somebody, in his smithy, was making — well what? Scythes to mow the clouds. . . .

There had been a slight eruption a few days before. It was smoking lazily, just as the liner in the Bay was, as if the forces below, in leash, ready, all steam up, awaited the word of command, to drive the hammer-god's forge or the pygmies' ship towards some ordered end.

And Pyotr had reflected quaintly that he had been long dormant, like a tame volcano, reduced to turning out trivial grindstones instead of good sizeable millstones to crush the gods' corn into meal for their muffins.

He had heard Nischka carolling an early Irish ballad. . . .

'The gay linnet!' he had thought, as he moved on, remembering her request.

It was the sort of day on which anything could happen, particularly on Capri, where many things always happen.

And Pyotr was not surprised when in the middle of the afternoon as he lounged there under the vine of a bench, to hear some way off a drum. Not like any drum he knew. . . . *Tim* boom boom *tim* boom-boom . . . then the *drelìn, din, drelìn, din* of bells . . . and then a chant, monotonous, high-pitched, recitative. . . . Tiberio!

The *padrone,* an old man with a fine Carthaginian skull and a pleasant wrinkled face, the remote descendant of a Roman slave, told him it was a *festa.* "Do not hurry, Signore. It will pass here again soon, on the way to the Villa Tiberio.

But Pyotr was already noting the rhythm on his cablegram — across Alexey's words. . . . *Tim* boom boom . . . *tim* boom boom —

He filled the cable with the spidery score, and ordered some sheets of paper from the *padrone.* Never had his Rhapsody in Three Modes gone so well. . . . His shy mind began to go over these recent timeless days with Nischka, under the golden wine's freedom; he had begun to *use* life itself, the rich, warm magic of it, without being conscious of the process. In his music fragments of it came back to him to be embellished on the *trattoria* paper.

Pyotr worked as only an artist at peace with the world and with his heart, and with his creative feeling can work.

And the lazy afternoon went by.

He was aroused at sunset by the *padrone* who, undirected, had brought him some soup.

"*Pranzo, signore?*"

"*Si,*" said Pyotr absently.

But as he picked up the battered spoon, the drum sound came back, nearer and nearer . . . *tim* boom boom . . . *tim* boom boom.

And Pyotr, in a spell, dashed out into the road, leaving his score and his soup, and his unfinished wine to follow the processional, half Pagan, half churchly, with the rabble of tourists, and islanders, who marched spellbound by the bubbling rhythm of the water-drum carried by two slaves, followed by an unearthly white swan on poles, carried by eight slaves. Standing amid the swan's feathers was the young Tiberius, chanting the Island legend of the Mad Emperor.

There were satellites with fragrant torches of olive wood and other personages, all meaning nothing to Pyotr. But the rhythm of the little pageant, the water-drum, the pre-Gregorian chant and the strangeness of it all led him a willing captive without chains, as it did all the others.

Something Pagan in all the motley throng had responded. It may have been some such allure that enabled Jeanne d'Arc to lead her followers. . . .

They marched down a stony road, over which the wheels of Tiberius' bronze chariot of state once rolled when the road was smoother, as if they marched into the path of the setting sun that lay in the water beneath them, a glittering and phantom road.

As it grew dark the procession wound through the last straggling houses and the last barking dogs (the

road grew rougher, the flaring torchlights more unreal than ever), and came to the little temple of Venus now presided over by a gilded Madonna.

It was here that Pyotr became aware of a girl in a silver dress who appeared to be limping; and in the pause of the Pagan rites while the young Tiberius went into the temple to commune no doubt with the shadowy Venus who had once dwelt there, the girl spoke to Pyotr.

"Isn't it all exciting," said she.

And her voice supplied for Pyotr the flute that he had felt lacking in the archaic festival.

"*Da,*" he heard himself saying. . . . "Are you hurt, Signorina?" he asked, for the girl was standing on one foot and somewhat ruefully rubbing the other with her fingers like a child who has stubbed her toe.

"I lost a slipper a little way back, I think," said she. "And oh, what a road Tiberius leads his victims!"

But Pyotr had already run back in search of the slipper which he found gleaming in the light of the torches and brought it to her and fastened it for her.

"I dashed out while I was getting ready for dinner," said the silver girl, "and forgot to fasten it. But who could resist all this?"

And they both laughed.

The water-drum took up its litany once more and Tiberius was taken up by his weary slaves. The procession moved onward towards the ruined Villa on the promontory.

But the spell of it had been supplanted. The girl loitered and Pyotr loitered with her and gave her his arm.

For she still limped a little.

Her name, it seemed, was Altierce. "And you," she informed him, "are the Russian violinist of the Villa of the Innocenti."

"Pyotr," he informed her.

"Yes, Pyotr," she said, as if she had known that too.

"I smell," said she, "a flower there on the right, I think. Will you get it for me?" And Pyotr sought in the dark and found an exceedingly haunting little flower which he brought back to her.

"I thought," said she, "that this sometimes bloomed in September! Have you ever heard, Signorino Pietro, that in ancient times such as this one in which we find ourselves 'it was reckoned extremely dangerous to encounter a demigod after sunset?'"

To which Pyotr answered, "I am very glad that it is."

"Because, you see," Altierce went on, beguilingly, "in the daytime it is comparatively easy to deal with such people!"

They had reached the entrance marked by its broken columns, and tangle of verdure. The procession had halted a little beyond them and the ring of torches seemed to enclose the white swan finally at rest and the young Tiberius who was making some pantomimic invocation to the antique gods. Altierce interlaced her arm impulsively with Pyotr's, and two thin and exceedingly cool hands took his. "I feel," said she, softly, "that it is sacred, don't you? I feel that we have no right there; let us turn back now. We might," she added laughingly, "become a sac-

rifice to these old gods and be hurled from the '*salto di Tiberio.*'"

"To be hurled anywhere . . . with you . . ." Pyotr murmured.

Which the silver girl found a sufficient answer.

"Oh, I just remembered," said Altierce as they passed the little temple where the gilded Madonna of the church smiled down at them, amusedly, in the light of the bonfire that was going forward on the Timberio (as the natives call it) behind them — "I just remembered I was going to a party when that divine drum beckoned me out into the byways . . . to encounter you, evidently, it would seem. I believe it was a party given for me," she added demurely. "The Prince of Rosemold. . . . Doll Palinfors . . . *The* MacGillie . . . Baron Tarfen . . . Mrs. Honorable Betty Allsaints — all those people, you know."

Pyotr didn't, but he smiled at her irresponsible dismissal of them.

"And of course now it's too late to go there anyway," she went on judicially, even as the little girl who, having made away with two pots of Bar-le-duc during her mother's absence, alleged with profound belief, when accused, that it might have been an elephant who ate them. "Anyway, *they* are not demigods! . . . They only have little cockades and buttonhole ribbons. Our being what we are carries an immediate responsibility, don't you think, Demigod? Why don't you come and have a party with me?"

And Pyotr needed no further urging.

Chapter XXX

THE MACHINATIONS OF THE ARACHNIDAE

CHAPTER XXX

ALTIERCE suddenly flung the silver dress off in her dimly lighted Moorish baroque salon. For demigod had just kissed demigod.

"Too tight," said she; "can't breathe."

And she dashed up the little flight of Moorish stairs whose loosened marble treads echoed her light laughter, a flash of ashen roses and deciduous golden hairpins.

And Pyotr followed.

"Better go before daybreak," she said quaintly, "It is better for a lover, always to go before daybreak."

"You mean . . . he isn't a demigod anymore," inquired Pyotr lazily.

"It is better to return at noon," she said cryptically.

And at sunrise, as Pyotr traversed once more the stony road of his first mad escapade on the enchanted Island in the sky, walking as one walks in a dream after a perfect opera, he reflected that to be called a demigod was in truth to be one.

Here was the sleeping vine of the *trattoria* under which, no doubt, lay his unfinished score of yesterday . . . here he first saw Altierce in the crowd . . . a faery child with witch-blonde hair . . . and

a crown of those strange flowers . . . and here by the old temple of Venus he had noticed that she was limping . . . seemed to have lost a shoe . . . and just here she had spoken to him. . . .

Pyotr halted and looked up at the gilded Madonna. He took from his pocket that fragile silver sandal that Altierce had given him, with an old Greek fable to restore its lustre . . . a fable in which an eagle complains of being wounded by an arrow feathered from its own wing. . . .

Pyotr stared at the frail thing in amazement and turned it over. Yes, to be sure, there it was, the burned-in word — Maestro. He had designed it himself two years ago in New York, among other fantastic *sandalia* out of an old book of Greek manners and customs. The heel he remembered contained in a hollow within its slenderness some of the same aromatic perfumed dust that he had then persuaded Alexey to use. . . .

"Did she lose this shoe on purpose?" he inquired aloud of the Madonna, who answered him never a word, but smiled discreetly down at him, as if that were a question no lady could possibly answer about another except by silence.

Pyotr walked on, in the gathering daylight, to the edge of the ruins of Tiberius' Villa, to where Altierce had said softly: "And this, you know, Demigod, is the reality of the Fata Morgana in the Bay of Naples. Let us turn back! . . ."

And now *he* turned back, having relived every moment of that journey . . . to the place where she had said: "I smell a strange flower; please get it for me. There on the right, it must be."

And now, in the light, he found another flower just like it, still almost fresh. For it was twisted in the tinsel and ribbon crown that Altierce had thrown there. He took the crown wonderingly and retraced his steps.

But ah . . . Nischka's linnet? He had almost forgotten. And his score — left precipitately in the *trattoria*.

He hastened. . . . For the old Greek soothsayers have said that a man truly beloved by a woman finds it only too easy to love another woman. . . .

Pyotr paused.

Perhaps that was what Nischka had meant about a yellow-haired Princess some day? Compunction took him; not guilt, scarcely disloyalty. Though Pyotr could scarcely think what was the feeling he had, as he stood at the gate.

There was the sleeping Villa of the Innocenti and there was Nischka's balcony, where they had played at Pelléas and Mélisande . . . was it only three nights ago?

Rusty lay the chain on the path for the dog of the Innocenti; the swallows were muttering among themselves about breakfast; there was a chill sound in the song of the fountain, and the terrace had a melancholy look about it. . . .

There is more gentle reproach in the aspect of an old garden, early in the day, than there is in any other man-made place. . . .

And now Alexey perhaps was there. . . .

He took the rusty old key from his pocket and unlocked the gate. Nischka's flower-basket and shears lay forgotten on the bench, and her wide

garden hat, damp from the dew. Her Pompeian sun-mask mocked him, seemed ghostily to have taken on some fleeting expression of hers.

He stooped to look at the iron shears of the Erinyes. A spider had woven a silver net from blade to blade, and was up early, busily strengthening it for the morning flies.

Pyotr felt a cold shiver in his shoulders, and his face suddenly burned, and a sharp pain smote him somewhere as it has many a man who has gone thoughtlessly from one woman to another, then back again . . . haunted by memory . . . re-haunted by other memories, with a divided heart.

"But she called me a demigod!" he muttered, not defensively, but as one who remembers a song of yesterday.

Then he saw Tukkim, who had come silently out of the open door, his little cap on one side, and stood there looking at him gravely, like a dwarf.

And suddenly he demolished the spider's web with the rusty old gate-key, and walked briskly into the Villa in search of coffee.

Chapter XXXI

"AND A BIRD SNATCHED THE TALISMAN OUT OF HIS HANDS AND FLEW AWAY WITH IT"

CHAPTER XXXI

SINCE there was no boat for three days, it was not too difficult to persuade Alexey to accept necessity's delay as a little holiday. Alexey glowed in the secret part of his heart, where no lamp had ever been lighted, at the revelation that Nischka was to him.

And the second day he invited Pyotr to come and see the Blue Grotto with him. No sooner had they pulled away from the Marina Grande in a boat than he said abruptly, "Petrouchka, I want to talk to you. Does this guy understand English?"

"Not too much," said Pyotr, glancing at him.

"We've all got to go home, old man, not only for business. That scrap of shrapnel they dug out of Gavril's head left a pressure on his brain. Lessing thinks it'll have to be trepanned once more. Gavril is losing his memory quite a bit. And he wants to see you both before he goes under, you know. He may not . . . come back. And then, also, we simply have to have a few designs from our father or you or both of you to buck up business. We are losing out to that Tarsak crowd. If we can just buck them this season with our old originality we can beat 'em out. We've got everybody else as a subsidiary in Paris and London and everywhere. But New York's the center of style and New York's as fickle as a trollop.

But since we educated her, like every other woman that was ever educated, she'll take second best just because it glitters. It's about the last thing I'll ever ask of Father or you. I know more than I did, day before yesterday. I had a long talk with Nischka yesterday. I sort of understand things about you two for the first time in my life. I guess you and I always did cross swords a bit."

Alexey paused to light a cigar.

"Why, yes," said Pyotr, "of course. Poor old Gavril. We'll go back with you. I'll help all I can."

"Another thing," continued Alexey as they entered the Blue Grotto. "It's Nischka, old man. You can't marry her, you know. She doesn't marry people. She's nearly old enough to be your mother. I . . ."

They floated in the silent Grotto — the veritable womb of the Island — where in the clear depths they could see the steps that once led upward through some passageway to the Villa of Tiberius, as if in some unearthly stage-setting.

Pyotr, buried in his thoughts, caught a handful of blue water that became instantly gleaming silver and threw it away. It scattered like a handful of mercury.

He fought with an unreasoning and unreasonable desire to take Alexey by the throat and drown him. Golaud . . . the cavern in Pelléas . . . the Trappeza — Nischka's party for poor people — had not been able to resist the demands, the legitimate demands of life itself. . . . Poor old Gavril. . . . He felt as he used to feel when Alexey came into the shop in Orchard Street and flung his cap many sizes

larger upon his own defenseless head . . . and yet — he recovered his serenity as the last of the silver water was melted into the blue. There was Altierce . . . there were the things Nischka had told him . . . sober, sweet, real things: ' I have not played with you, my dear, as a wanton, nor as a nymphomaniac ' she had said. . . . ' I have tried to attune you to life and love and music . . . tried to release the tension that I saw in you that day in Vienna when we went to the Sacher for luncheon . . . you could have fared much worse. You are too young to know what I have done for you. Some day you will know.'

With a supreme effort of will Pyotr pushed away the metaphysical cap that Alexey had buried him in by coming to Capri. Life has few holidays he had just learned. He felt that the fabric of New York, merciless and yet inevitable, had claimed him out of this *dolce far niente,* as the vulture snatched the talisman out of Camaralzaman's very hands in the Arabic tale. And now he had to set out and cross the mountains and the sea in search of it again. . . .

He looked up at Alexey and smiled bravely, and held out his hand.

"All right, Aleck," he said, evenly. "I understand you."

And Alexey gripped his hand very hard.

" Let's go back now," said he.

Chapter XXXII

PROMISES AND FAREWELLS AND FOREBODINGS AND OVERTONES

CHAPTER XXXII

"We shall meet again on some Roman road of the world," said Altierce, at noon the next day.

For Pyotr had gone to say good-bye to her in the quaint little Moorish baroque salon of her villa.

"After sunset?" Pyotr inquired, almost gaily.

She looked at him very straightly and the playful mask of her heart-shaped face, high of cheek bone — boasting what a great sculpture once called the mounts of Astarte between those high cheek bones and the equally devastating provocations at the corners of her somewhat wide mouth — went away to some dim storehouse where the masks of women are re-made, it may be, when they tell the utter truth and therefore do not need them for a moment. For her look had a lovely truth in it.

"Is it wise," said Altierce, "for either of us ever to *try* to encounter a demigod a second time?"

But she smiled as if after all there were many Roman roads paved and waiting for them in every land.

Pyotr went away whistling the *Chanson Arabe* of Rimsky-Korsakoff.

And so they left Nischka's floating island of Laputa, and she journeyed with them to Paris where she had very shortly to appear in the opera, and was

already overdue for rehearsals. And in the Gare du Nord she embraced old Ivan tenderly and kissed Pyotr almost shyly.

She gave Alexey Tukkim's paw to shake.

Which Alexey somehow understood.

And as she stood outside the boat-train after the doors were locked, with tears of many origins streaming down her face, she said: " God bless you, Pyotr. . . . Remember me in your prayers, Maestro. I shall need them. . . . Oh, Alexey — "

" Da," said the old man.

" Good-bye, Napoleon," she called to Alexey, who stood drinking all of her in that he could with his eyes from the window of the next compartment; " Good-bye, until November," she managed to say, with some insouciance.

" May I? " shrieked Alexey above the pandemonium of a French train getting under way. " May I try then — to pay — some — of the — laundry bill of — two thousand years — of the — theatre? — *Love!* "

The Gare du Nord is patinated with such overtones shrieked from departing trains, although it appears to be the soot of the coal of old primeval French forests. . . .

But Tukkim evidently heard, for he clawed at Nischka's arm and bit it, perhaps in veritable jealousy.

For Tukkim's nerves could stand no more.

Chapter XXXIII

ARIA DA CAPO . . . CON AMORE

CHAPTER XXXIII

It was Spring in Orchard Street. The push-cart men proclaimed it with flowers whose stems were wound with wire, flowers whose hectic, drooping gaiety had been stimulated with stale aspirin. Flowers as yet too fragile to withstand the vicissitudes of Commerce.

Ivan Mestravvik, the cobbler, sighed as he finished mending a child's shoe, once more rendered street-worthy by a nail, two stitches and two thumps of his stubby hammer.

The little girl who waited for the shoe, standing on one foot like a restless crane, took it and put it on, stamped with approval, and extracted, reluctantly, five pennies from her apron pocket.

But Ivan the cobbler waved them aside and touched his lips significantly with his thumb and forefinger, which the child readily understood to mean that she was to buy candy instead, so she raced up the cellar stairs without ceremony towards that end.

For it was well-known in Orchard Street that Ivan would never take money from a child.

And Ivan sighed with pleasant anticipation. For it was his seventieth birthday and presently Pyotr would come and take him uptown to the little Rus-

sian restaurant that they had all gone to on great days for years, for his birthday luncheon. Gavril was out of the hospital at last, the lesion in his brain cured. Nicolai, the wanderer, was home from the sea. . . .

Ivan was content.

He had put on the golden ring that his Radiana had given him when she married him, and he took out of his worn old Russian pocketbook a long lock of her hair as black as black velvet. He touched the worn-to-wraith yellow cablegrams of Nischka's praise; he polished gently on his sleeve the silver ring that he had made long ago for her out of the two-shilling piece of New South Wales, and compared it thoughtfully with that other silver ring with the blue stone in it that the ballet woman had given him in Moscow. . . . His first gift. . . .

For Nischka was coming to preside at the luncheon.

He looked up suddenly at the cellar window, now cleansed of the cobwebs of years, even as his ripe old soul — for Pyotr had kept the old shop rent-paid all those years and had brought him back to it two hours ago and unlocked it with the old brass key and told him gently that he never had to go anywhere else unless he chose. For Doctor Lessing had told the boys that they had to release Ivan from everything whatsoever, for the rest of his life.

There were four lovely feet standing at his window and something stirred in the memory that lay in the old man's eyes.

Click-click clock were the sounds that heralded

the opening of his door and there stood Lucinda and with her another and younger Lucinda.

Lucinda embraced him much to his confusion and 'Cindy took his hand in both of hers.

"Think of finding you here again," said the Princess. "We have just come from the Settlement House. 'Cindy is to dance there this evening, will you come?"

"It is my birthday," said Ivan. "Will you come to party uptown? Pyotr —"

But Pyotr entered at that moment with his arms full of the wire-armatured flowers of Orchard Street. For he knew they would please Ivan more than any others.

"Why you are —?" said Pyotr.

"Why you are —?" said 'Cindy.

And Pyotr kissed first her hands and, since the gesture seemed to be indicated, kissed her lips, which seemed to startle 'Cindy not at all.

"Do you know, Maestro," Lucinda was saying, "if you had not made those red dancing shoes for me, eighteen years ago, I do not believe my daughter would be Mademoiselle Cindarelle, who danced in Pyotr's *Rhapsody of Orchard Street* last week. It is that that she is to repeat at the Settlement House tonight. I met my husband the night I wore those lovely shoes. See what you have given me!"

Pyotr and 'Cindy stood gazing at each other.

"Please take off your hat," said he. She did so, as one obeying some mystical command.

"You *are* the Princess Lointaine," said he in surprise, "and your nose isn't flattened any more!"

"Clothespin," said 'Cindy, holding up two fingers and pinching her delectable nose.

As the two taxicabs that Pyotr purveyed to take them uptown to meet Nischka, and Marya, and Mikael, and all the boys, separated in traffic (since the young must always fly faster), Lucinda said to Ivan in the slower one: "I wonder, Maestro, if your gifted son, and my darling little daughter are finding other things to speak of in that blue taxi of theirs."

"*Da,*" said Ivan. . . . "Perhaps."

ENVOI

" For the Eft-Princess took the one-footed Giant's wooden shoe while he slept. And the Poet-fool made her a ship of it, with a sail all of silk-sewn sea-birds' wings, and a mast of the Giant's dog-wand, and a lantern bent of the Giant's copper sugar-spoon. . . .

" And they set sail in it out of the Harbour of Duress, quite without a rudder. . . .

" And the one-footed Giant without his wooden shoe could not run after them . . . for he had a peg-leg. . . . And without his dog-wand could not beat up a storm against them . . . and without his sugar-spoon could not fling crystal hail after them. . . .

" And their silken stitches held the wind well, in the sail of sea-birds' wings, and their lantern shone sufficingly. . . .

" And the Poet-fool could sing, and the Eft-Princess knew how to listen . . . passably well. . . .

" And quite without a rudder they came to a pleasant Port of Tarry, and lingered there a while. . . .

" But of their tale there is no ending, Little Doves and Falcons! . . . but I would tell it you if I could."

Old Norcisle Fire-tale